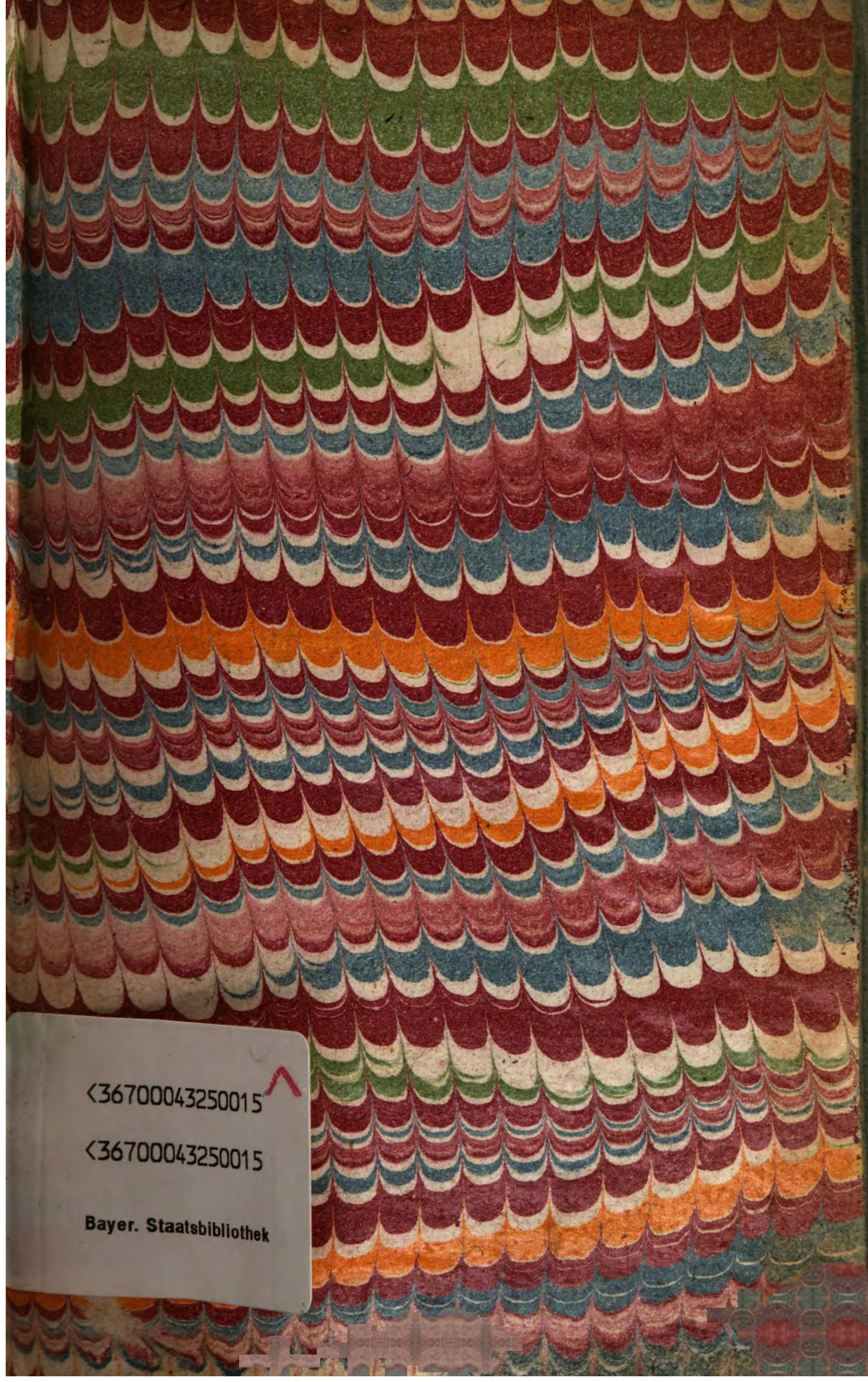








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RELIGIOUS

ABRIDGED

SERMONS

Preached at the Lecture & Sabbath

The Hon^{ble} Robert Hays, Esq

VOL. III.



IN THE B. A. I. N.

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Hom. 255.

A DEFENCE of
NATURAL and REVEALED
RELIGION:
BEING AN
ABRIDGMENT
OF THE
SERMONS

Preached at the LECTURE founded by

The Hon^{ble} *Robert Boyle*, Esq;

V O L. III.



D U B L I N:

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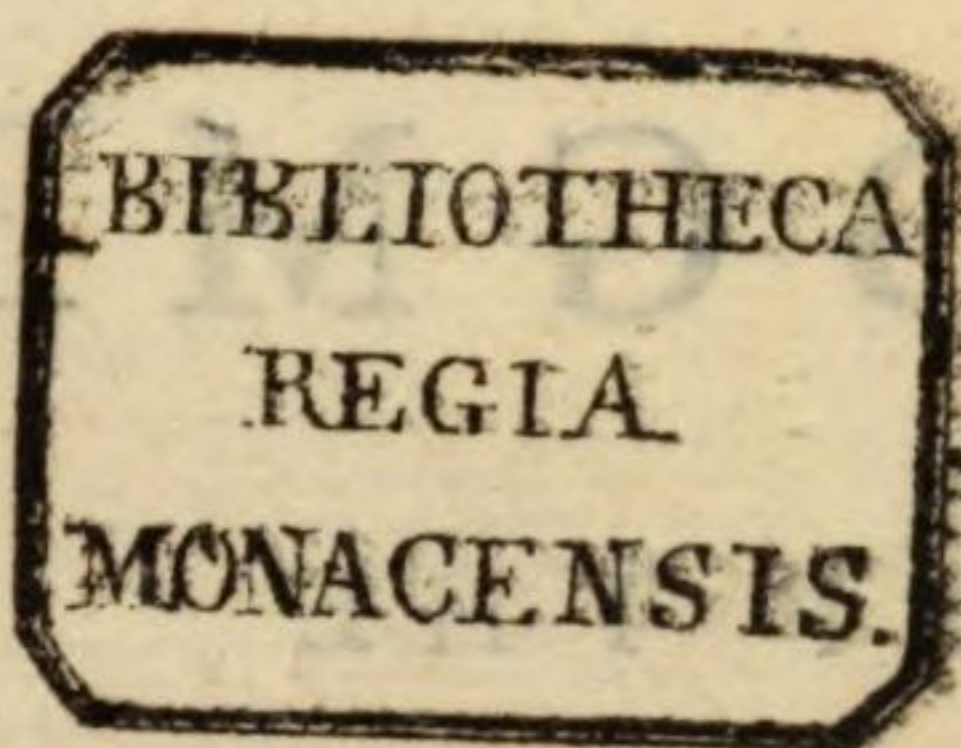
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in Castle Street, MDCCLXXII.

T O

Richard Du Cane, Esq;

S I R,

THE many Favours I have receiv'd from you, ever since I had the Honour and Happiness of being esteem'd one of your Friends, make me take this Opportunity of a public Acknowledgment.

And if this Way of expressing my Gratitude be not disagreeable to you, who take more Pleasure in doing Good, than in having it known; I am under no Apprehension that I need make any Apology, for placing your Name in a Defence of Christianity: For you are not become so fashionable as to be
A 2 ashamed

DEDICATION.

ashamed of the Religion you profess,
but look upon the Knowledge of it as
the truest Learning, and its Practice as
the greatest Accomplishment.

I am, SIR,

Your Most Obedient,

Obliged, Humble Servant,

GILBERT BURNET.

Dr. *I B B O T's*

BOYLE's LECTURES.

The true NOTION of the

EXERCISE

OF

PRIVATE JUDGMENT,

OR

FREE-THINKING.

I THESS. V. 21.

Prove all Things; hold fast that which is good.

IN prosecuting this Subject, I shall observe the following Method:

I. To enquire what the Apostle here means by proving all Things: To state the true Notion of Private Judgment or Freedom of Thought.

II. To consider what that *Free-thinking* is, which is falsely so called.

III. To prove that Free-thinking, properly so called, is every Man's Right and Duty.

IV. To shew what Cautions are necessary to be observed in the Use of it.

6 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

V. Shew that true Religion is not an Enemy to true Free-thinking.

VI. Shew the Dangers which Men expose themselves to, by indulging that Humour which they falsely call *Free-thinking*.

I. I shall enquire what the Apostle here means by *proving all Things*: To state the true Notion of that Private Judgment, or Freedom of Thought, which every Man ought to exercise in religious Matters; and to shew wherein it consists.

The Apostle's Precept is directed to all Persons; and the Trial, which every Man is to make, is to be extended to all Points, both of Doctrine and Practice; for the Matters of Religion, of all others, ought not to be taken on Trust; there is nothing wherein we are more concerned to exercise our Reason and Understanding, because our greatest Interest lies at stake; if through a wilful Neglect of using our own Judgment, we fall into a wrong Way, it may lead us to our eternal Ruin.

Now when the Apostle bids us *prove* all Things, he plainly supposes, that there is some Rule in Being, whereby we may judge of what is thus proposed to us.

This Rule can be no other than *Reason* or *Revelation*. And even when there is a Revelation, we are to judge of its Meanings and Proofs by *Reason*.

That we think, and that we have not the Liberty to do otherwise, is evident; but to think on this or that Subject, as long or as attent as we please, is also in our Power.

And this Liberty we are enjoined to use in religious Matters, to make them the frequent Subject of our Thoughts, and to reason with ourselves about them.

Without this it is impossible for us to know any thing, but in Matters of Sense and Intuition.

Matters of Sense are out of the present Question.

And *Matters of Intuition*, where the Agreement
and

and Disagreement between two Ideas are immediately visible, without the Intervention of others, in Religion are very few.

So that in religious Matters we ought to exercise our rational Faculties, where the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas cannot be found out without the Help of other immediate Ideas, and disposing them in a proper Order, in which the Faculty of Reasoning consists.

In this Proceeding several Rules are to be observed, without which we cannot *think justly* or *freely* upon any Subject.

1. We must have a sincere Love of Truth for its own Sake.

This Love of Truth very few have, as may appear more especially in religious Matters, where they will not be satisfied with such Proofs as the Nature of the Thing is capable of, and make those Objections they would be ashamed of in other Cases. Indeed the Evidence which we have for the Truth of any thing is always to be the Measure of our Assent; and whoever goes beyond this Measure, does not so much believe any thing to be true, because it is so, as because he is willing to have it so. But as our Assent is not to rise higher than the Proofs, so neither ought it to fall lower. And therefore whenever any thing has all the Proofs of its being true, which it could have, were it actually true, we ought to give it our Assent; and if we do not, we have not a general Love for Truth, but are prejudiced; and then our Enquiries will be cool or partial, and our Examinations will be made with little Care. To avoid which Inconveniences we should learn to love Truth for itself.

We should consider that 'tis what we were made to discover and entertain; that it perfects our Nature, and till we are bias'd by some inordinate Passion, 'tis the most grateful Thing to the Mind.

8 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

We should make it our Business to renew this Love for Truth, and never to depart from it.

2. If we be thus in Love with Truth, our Fears will never hinder us in our Enquiries after it; for nothing can follow from Truth but Truth, and the more we shall have of it, we shall be the better able to discern and pursue our true Interest.

Let us therefore never decline this Trial, nor dread any Consequences of any Truth, but push it as far as it will go.

As *Things* will not comply with our *Opinions*, our *Opinions* should comply with them.

For great is Truth. Tho' she is not always welcome, 'tis always wise to hearken to her, because she is faithful and impartial in her Counsels, and will give us Warning that we may take Care to prevent our Danger.

We often build upon a false Foundation, we receive many Things for true without examining them; and then we dare not examine them, for fear we should find our Mistake; but this is preposterous. We should receive nothing for Truth but what we have found to be so; or if we have taken Things for true, without examining them, this should not make us afraid to search into them afterwards; because Things will be just what they are, and we shall find them so, however we may think of them at present; and tho' we may receive Mischief from Error, we cannot be hurt by Truth.

3. This being the Case of Truth, we must examine into it with the utmost *Sincerity and Impartiality*; we must divest ourselves of *Prejudice*; we must lay aside all *receiv'd Hypotheses*, and *Opinions*, and *Passions*; we must not *wish* one Side should be more true than the other, but only that we might find on which Side Truth lies, and have no other Ends in View but that.

And in our Enquiries after Truth, we should proceed upon Principles of Reason, coolly and fairly
debate

debate the Matter, and give all the Proofs the Weight they are capable of, and deal with all the Objections in the same Manner.

We should have no Regard to *Party* or *Passion*; not regard *Men* but *Truth*; we should not *rail*, but *reason*; and when our Arguments are at an End we should submit.

4. In trying *religious Matters*, we should make use of all the Helps God has given us.

If we enjoy the Benefit of Revelation, and the Question be concerning a Truth contain'd in any *particular Place* of *Scripture*; or whether the *Collection* of those *Truths* proposed to us for divine Truths be contained in Scripture, we are not to think ourselves obliged to interpret Scripture according to what some Men call the *Analogy of Faith*, which is only their own particular System of Christian Doctrines:

Nor are we to imagine that our own natural Reason, without other Helps, will find out the true Sense of Scripture. No, we must make use of other Helps, such as the Languages the Scriptures were wrote in, the Idioms thereof; and of every particular Writer, the Manners, and Customs, and Opinions of those People they were writ to. These are necessary Helps to a right Understanding of Scripture; and without these whoever pretends to understand and criticise upon the Scriptures is a Fool. Where Men have no other Guide but Reason, they must make the best Use of it, and free themselves from whatever might hinder it from exerting its Force. And whatever appears upon a due Examination of their rational Faculties to be true, they must *believe*; and whatever appears fittest to be done, they are bound to practise.

5. The last Thing necessary in our Enquiries after *Truth*, is a firm Resolution to embrace it, whenever it is found, and to be governed by it.

If

10 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

If this is not our Design, our Enquiries will want that Sincerity and Industry which is absolutely necessary to find out Truth.

There are some Truths that serve only for Amusement; but the Truths I am now speaking of must influence our Practice, and if we are not resolved to be governed by them, we shall never be desirous to know them. Any religious Truth will make us uneasy as long as we hold it in *Unrighteousness*; and this will make us shun the Knowledge of it, or endeavour to be of a contrary Opinion.

The Consequence of our Unwillingness to obey the Truth will be, that we shall require stricter Proofs of the Truth than are possible to be had, which will lead us to *Scepticism*, and so to *Infidelity*.

The Apostle supposes, and all Men generally agree, that there is *Truth* and *Falshood*, *Right* and *Wrong*, *Good* and *Evil*. Now that which after our best Enquiries appears to us to be the *Right* and *Good*, we are to submit to it, and to be govern'd by it.

This may suffice for the first Thing proposed, *viz.* to inquire what is meant by *proving all Things*. I proceed,

II. To consider what that *Free-thinking* is, which is falsely *so called*.

The present *Free-thinking* differs widely from what is properly so called, *viz.* from *fair Examination* and *just Reasoning*.

And as a Man is never the more a *Free-Agent*, because he can break loose from the Conduct of Reason, so no Man is ever the more a *Free-Thinker*, because in thinking he is under no Rule and Order.

As 'tis no Restraint, but the true Use of our Liberty to determine our Choice by wise Motives; so it is no Restraint of our Freedom of thinking
to

Private Judgment, or Free-thinking. II

to think justly, and not to deny and affirm any thing at Pleasure.

But the present Freedom which some have used in their Thoughts and Writings is not Freedom, but a Licentiousness of Thought; 'tis babbling and prating *against Religion* with *malicious Words*, more than making any sober Enquiries about it. 'Tis an unaccountable Medley of Humour and Fancy, Mirth and Malice; it consists in Boldness and Presumption, and is full of Prejudices and Mistakes.

This seems to be the *Free-thinking* so much boasted of, and this I will make good by several undeniable Instances.

But because the great *Defect* of the present *Free-thinkers* is a Neglect of the proper Rules of true *Free-thinking* and *fair Examination*, and because I have laid down some of these Rules, I shall now apply them to the present *Free-thinking* in order to lay open the *Falseness* of it. The first of these Rules was this, That every one who seriously sets upon the Search of Truth, ought to prepare his Mind with a Love of Truth for its own Sake.

Whether we thus love Truth, we may know, by our entertaining, or not entertaining, any Proposition with greater or less Assurance than the Proofs it is built upon will warrant.

The Strength of the Proofs of any Proposition is always to be the Measure of our Assent to it.

And therefore if our present Free thinkers do either refuse to give that Credit to *some Things*, which the Proofs they are built upon will warrant; or give it to *others*, which have less Evidence, they have not a Love for Truth.

And this will lead me to examine some of their chief Arguments.

Now suppose there was a Question started, whether God did afford Men any other *Light* than that
of

12 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

of Nature, any other Means of coming to the Knowledge of the Truth than their own Reason? Let us think freely upon it, and try which Way we can determine it.

Here, I presume, no Free-thinker will affirm that God has tied up his Hands from affording us the Light of Revelation, in those Things which we could not otherwise know; he cannot deny the Possibility of it. But it is not only possible, but highly probable, as I shall shew hereafter.

Therefore if God may reveal his Will to any one, he certainly can empower that Person to communicate it to others, and enable him to do such wonderful Things, as are sufficient to convince Men that what he delivers is from God.

This being the Case, it is by no means just Reasoning to infer, that because there have been false Pretences to Revelation, that therefore there is no such Thing; on the contrary, if any Argument can be drawn from hence it is this, *viz.* because there have been many Pretences to Revelation, that therefore this is a Proof of the Reality of the Thing.

How then shall we know the *Pretence* from the *Reality*? I answer, by some external Sign; because, without this, the Revelation would never convince others, or be satisfactory to whom it was revealed. Accordingly we find that God observed this Method in Scripture, with those who were sent with Revelations from him to other People.

Thus we read of *Moses*, *Exod. iii. that he saw the Bush burn without consuming, and heard a Voice out of it.* Which Miracle, tho' sufficient to satisfy him, yet he could not look upon it as sufficient to authorize him to go upon that Message, till God, by turning his Rod into a Serpent, assured him thereby of a Power to satisfy his Mission, by the same Miracle repeated before them.

From the Consideration of the Possibility of a
divine

divine Revelation in *general*, let us in particular, examine whether the Christian Religion is founded on divine Revelation. How shall we be resolved in this important Point? The Way to do this, a *Free-thinker* tells us, is to renounce all Guides, and to think freely for ourselves about this Matter*.

But if by Free-thinking be meant *bare Reason*, and *metaphysical Speculations*, 'tis impossible for us this Way to come to any Certainty in this present Case; for Revelation in *general*, and that which Christianity is founded upon, does resolve itself into plain Matter of Fact: Whence the Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Revelation can be only a *moral Evidence*, arising from *ancient Testimonies* and authentick History of plain Matter of Fact.

So that if I should propose to inform myself whether the Christian Revelation be true, I must enquire whether the History of the Gospel be true; for if that be true, the Christian Revelation is so too.

Now 'tis impossible to determine this in our Thoughts only, we must take in the Witness of others, who lived at, or near those Times; and examine all the *Evidences* and *Monuments* of *Antiquity* relating to these *Facts*.

And whoever takes this Pains, will find the History of the Gospel stands upon a firmer Bottom than any other History.

And therefore whoever rejects the History of the Gospel, and yet gives Credit to other Histories, discovers gross Partiality.

But if the Facts recorded in the Gospel be true, then Christianity is founded on divine Revelation; then our Saviour had Authority from God to declare his Will; then he had Power to commission others to teach in his Name, and transmit his Doctrines to

* See *Discourse of Free-thinking*, pag. 24.

14 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

to Posterity; then he did assist them to do this with Certainty; and then we may suppose these Writings freer from Effects of human Weakness.

The Free-thinkers pretend to own the divine Authority of these Books in some Respects, and yet take away the Authority of them again, by levelling them with pretended Scriptures; but I shall vindicate the divine Authority of these Books, which we receive and believe to be the Word of God.

In asserting the Authority of these Books, I shall,

1. Consider the Matter contained in these Books.

And,

2. The Books themselves.

The Authority of these Books, is that peculiar Right they have to be received and regarded by us as true.

The immediate Foundation of which Authority is this, that they have God for their Author; whose *Veracity* demands to be credited in what it says or foretels; whose Power commands Obedience, and whose immutable Fidelity and Justice exacts Belief in what is *promised* or *threatened*.

The remote Foundation of this Authority is the Matter contained in these Books, which proves them to be from God.

Now the Contents of these Books may be ranked under three Heads.

1. There are some Things which Man could never have thought on.

2. There are other Things, which tho' not beyond the Reach of human Parts or Industry, yet cannot be supposed to proceed from Men, because no Reason can be assigned why Men should invent such Things; but on the contrary, there is good Reason why they should not invent them.

3. There are other Things, which tho' Men could invent, yet they would not believe they should ever come to pass.

1. Under

1. Under the first Head, I reckon all the Miracles and Predictions of our Saviour and his Apostles.

2. Under the *second* Head, I rank the Precepts of Christianity as they are laid down in the *New Testament*; where, 1st, we may consider the Things themselves, or Actions which are enjoined us; many of which, according to Man's Judgment, are ridiculous as *believing in Christ crucified*; or, they are contrary to the common Affections of human Nature, as *Mortification*, and loving our Enemies and parting with Life for the Sake of Christ or our Brethren: Or, 2^{dly}, we may consider the Persons themselves, who are enjoin'd these Precepts, who are all Mankind. Or, 3^{dly}, the Manner wherein these Duties are to be perform'd, *which is with all our Heart, and with a good Conscience, and faith unfeigned.*

3. Under the *third* Head, I place the Rewards and Punishments proposed to us in these Books, which relate to another Life.

Now such Things as these must have God for their *Author*.

For what Man would persuade himself, or attempt to persuade others, that a Virgin should have a Son that this Person should perform Miracles of all Kinds, and enable others to do the like. Such Things as these would pass all Belief, if the Revelation of them was not supported by undeniable Examples.

Again, What Man would enjoin, if he could, such a Religion as commands Things ungrateful to Flesh and Blood, and contrary to the common Sense of Mankind, and which, whether we perform them sincerely or no, 'tis impossible to tell.

This Religion cannot be of human Invention. For Men would never deal so severely by themselves, as to lay themselves under such strict Laws: Nor could any Man be so foolish as to think

think he could succeed in an Attempt to impose such Laws upon others: Or so arrogant and conceited as to imagine he could oblige Mens Consciences, by a feigned Authority of these Precepts; much less could he encourage Men to undergo the Hardships of obeying these Precepts, by proposing such a Reward as is plainly beyond the Desert of the best of Men, and so far beyond our Thoughts and Reach, that we can never hope to attain it, unless it was reveal'd by him, who is able to perform it.

Nor can it be looked upon to be a diabolical Invention. For that Spirit is too wise to invent a Religion, such as the Christian Religion is, so contrary to his Nature, and so destructive of his Kingdom.

If it be objected here, that this would be the Case, if these Promises were true, and these Precepts were given with a Design to be practised; I answer, 'tis no Matter whether the Promises are true, if they make Men endeavour to obey these Precepts, which they certainly do. So that the Devil, by framing such a Religion as this, would even against his Will be the Occasion of promoting Piety, which would be to destroy his own Kingdom.

If it be replied, that he knew the Precepts to be so difficult, that Men would despair of fulfilling them, and therefore never attempt it, and so come over to his Kingdom; I answer, that he knew the promises to be such as to enable them to overcome these Difficulties. The Hopes of eternal Happiness would soon enable us to undergo all the Miseries of this Life. But if it be said, that these Hopes are groundless; then, I say, that it was absurd to make these Promises. But why should these Promises be thought incredible? As they are proposed in these Books, they are *worthy of all Acceptation*. For these Books
give

give us an Example of the Certainty of the Things promised in our Saviour's Resurrection from the Dead. And we cannot suppose this was done by the Devil, the more effectually to excite Men to the Practice of Righteousness.

I conclude, therefore, that the Subject Matter of these Books prove them to be of divine Authority, since neither Men, nor Devils, could be the original Authors of them.

But when they are ascribed to *God*, they appear highly worthy of *God*, who by his infinite Power can easily perform all those Miracles related in the Gospels; and by his supreme Authority can enjoin such Things as are ungrateful to our corrupt Nature, and try our Obedience. His Holiness would prompt him to give us pure Rules; and his being a Discerner of our Thoughts, gives him a Right to require the Obedience of the Heart. And 'tis suitable to his divine Majesty, and infinite Goodness, to promise a Reward that exceeds our best Performances. I proceed now from the Matter,

2. To consider the Books themselves.

And, if I can show, that there is no Reason to doubt of the Authority of these, it will follow, that they ought to be received for the genuine Records of the Christian Religion.

Now the principal Reasons Men have to doubt of the Authority of any Book, are such as these.

1. That the Writer is a Man of no Credit.

2. That we cannot know certainly who the Writer was.

3. That it is to be suspected, that the Book has been corrupted.

4. That upon the Accounts the Book was not to be credited.

1. Then, one Reason to induce us to doubt of the Authority of any Book, is, that the Writer is not to be credited.

But this cannot be alledged against the Writers of the *New Testament*.

For either these Books were wrote by those, whose Names they bear, or by others.

If by others, it is to be shewn, who they were, that we may see whether they be Persons fit to be credited. For if it be said, it is sufficient to overthrow that Authority of the *New Testament*, that it cannot be proved that the Books were wrote by those whose Names they bear: I answer, that this does not affect the Truth of the Relation. It is sufficient to establish the Credit of the Books themselves, that they were wrote by Persons who liv'd at, or near the Time and Place where the Things were transacted; that their Relations were confirmed by contemporary Writers, and not contradicted by the bitterest Enemies of Christianity. All which is true of the Writers of the *New Testament*, whoever they were.

At present, therefore, let us suppose, for Argument's Sake, that the *reputed* are the *real* Writers of these Books; and let us examine, whether there be any Ground to suspect them, either of Ignorance or Infidelity.

St. *Matthew*, and St. *John*, were both constant Followers of Christ, so that they could not be ignorant of what they wrote about.

St. *Mark*, and St. *Luke*, who likewise wrote the History of Christ's Life, lived at the same Time, and at the same Place with our Saviour.

St. *Mark* was a Companion of St. *Paul*, who was miraculously called to be an Apostle, and was afterwards a Disciple of St. *Peter*, who was present when Christ worked his Miracles. Nay, St. *Mark* may be supposed to have wrote nothing but what was in a manner dictated by St. *Peter*.

St. *Luke* received from St. *Paul* every Thing that could give him a perfect Knowledge of the History he wrote. And the greatest Part of
the

the Actions mentioned in the *Acts* of the Apostles, which he also compiled, he was present at; and might be informed of the rest by St. *Paul*; so that he could not be ignorant of what he wrote.

Next to the Gospels, and the *Acts* of the Apostles, the Epistles of St. *Paul* make the most considerable Part of the *New Testament*. The Doctrinal Part of which can never be questioned, upon Account of his *natural Abilities*, and his *miraculous Call* to be an Apostle. What was *Historical*, we have observed he could not be ignorant of; and the *prophetical* Part may justly be supposed equally known to him, who was so near to our Saviour, and who could not pretend to know those future Events which were never discovered to him.

Besides St. *Paul*, St. *James*, *Peter*, *John*, and *Jude*, wrote Epistles, who, as they were Christ's Disciples, could not be ignorant of what they wrote.

The Book of the *Revelations*, which were discover'd to the Author in a Vision, is of the same Authority with the rest; because whoever was the Author, he tells us when and where the Vision befel him, so that he must know he had such a Vision, and what the Vision was.

If, therefore, the several Books were wrote by those whose Names they bear, we cannot doubt of their Knowledge of what they deliver'd.

Let us, in the next Place, see whether they were *unfaithful* in their Relations. And here, perhaps, some will suspect that they deviated from Truth, in order to make their Story good.

But when we consider, that these Writers were not only Christians, but constant Companions of Christ, there is no Room for this Suspicion, since we know how strictly Christ, and his Religion, commanded every Man to speak Truth.

And, therefore, it will add much to the Authority of these Books, if it appears, that they were wrote by those, whose Names they bear, or by any other Persons in the same Circumstances.

They were no otherwise concern'd in the Things they related, than as they valued Christ; and therefore it was inconsistent with their Design to impose upon the World.

So that if we consider the Qualifications of these Writers, there is no Ground to suspect either that they knew not the Truth, or have not faithfully related it.

As to the different and contradictory Accounts which these Books are supposed to contain, there are many Things that seem to differ, tho' they really do not so; and whenever this happens, 'tis in Things of little Moment. So that this Difference is a Proof of the Truth of what they wrote, that there was no Fraud, no consulting together to deceive; and that it was only Truth that produced this Agreement in their History, tho' some of them retaining Circumstances the other forgot, might differ from others in their Account of the same Things.

In the doctrinal Part of these Books, there is such a Harmony as advances the Credit of these Books above any other that delivers the Doctrines of any particular Sect.

As for Things that are in themselves absurd, there are none such in the *New Testament*, and where-ever any seem so, they are in such small Matters, as cannot weaken the Credit of the Book.

We cannot doubt, for the Reasons alledged, but that the Doctrines of Christianity are truly deliver'd to us in the Books of the *New Testament*.

2. I proceed to consider the second Ground of doubting of the Authority of any Book, viz. our not knowing the true Writer of that Book.

For if it be objected by those who in other Respects

spects own the Truth of Christianity, that if it appears not who wrote these Books, we have no Reason to believe either the *doctrinal* or *historical* Parts of them. The Credit of any historical Book depending upon our knowing who the Author was, whether he was acquainted with the Facts, and would not falsify them; and that he was thoroughly acquainted with the Doctrine he pretends to deliver; but without knowing the Author, we cannot know this.

In answer to this, I observe, there are two Things taken for granted, neither of which are true. One is, That we don't know any Thing of the Writers of the *New Testament*. The other is, That where we don't know the Writer of any Book, we cannot ground our Belief either of the *doctrinal* or *historical* Part of that Book.

1. That we know nothing of the Writers of the *New Testament*.

I answer, that if we know who was the Writer of any ancient Book, we know who were the Writers of the *New Testament*; and if Nobody doubts of the Author of any ancient Book, to whom it has constantly been ascribed; we ought not to doubt of the Authors of the *New Testament* for the same Reason.

But we have less Reason to doubt of the Authors of the *New Testament*, than of the Author of any other ancient Book. For since our Knowledge of the Author of any ancient Book, depends more upon the Testimony of those who lived when the Book was wrote; and the Agreement of learned Men, in that Point, than any other; what Book, so ancient as the *New Testament*, had so many Testimonies of this Kind?

Eusebius says, that for above two hundred and fifty Years, there was no Doubt who were the Authors of the several Books of the *New Testament*, excepting that to the *Hebrews*, the first Epistle of

22 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

St. Peter, and the first of *St. John*; and *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, and *Clemens Alexandrinus* assert the same.

After these succeeded a great Number of wise Men, who all agree in the Authors of these Books.

If it be objected, that we may justly question who were the Authors of the Epistle of *St. James*; the second of *St. Peter*; the second and third of *St. John*; that of *St. Jude*, and the Book of the *Revelations*. I answer, tho' it has been doubted who were the Authors of these Books by some, they were upon Enquiry satisfied about their Authors; and therefore there is now as much, if not more Credit due to them, than to those that had never been questioned, because they have had stricter Examination.

But, 1. Tho' we were ignorant of the true Author of any Book, it does not follow from hence, that the Book is of no Authority, either in Point of *History*, or *Doctrine*, or of less Authority than it would be, if we knew the Author.

For if the *Facts*, which it relates, be confirmed by contemporary Writers, and its Doctrines be attested for the Doctrines of Christianity, by other Christian Writers of the same, or the succeeding Age; if the Books are constantly appealed to, this is enough to establish their Credit, without knowing their Authors. And this is the Case of the Books of the *New Testament*; they were looked upon as containing true and genuine Accounts of Christianity, and always appealed to as such.

3. Another Ground of doubting of the Authority of any Book, is, when it appears, or when there is just Grounds to suspect it corrupted.

Now this Depravation must be either in *Part*, or universal. If this Depravation be only of Part of the History and Doctrine of the *New Testament*, this would quickly appear from the Disagreement of these Parts with others. But the perfect Harmony
of

of the several Writers of the *New Testament* will highly advance the Authority of the Book.

That the Depravation should be *universal*, is inconsistent with what has been already proved, that the several Books were wrote by those whose Names they bear.

4. The fourth Ground of doubting of the Authority of any Book, is, that upon other Accounts there are good Reasons why the Books should not be credited.

But no such Reasons can be produced; for the Books of the *New Testament* have had the Approbation of wise and good Men, from the first Ages to the present Times; and therefore there can be no Grounds for doubting.

But since there are Objections against the Books, it will be proper, in the next Place, to answer those Objections.

And here we are told, that the present *Samaritan Rabbies* receive the *five Books* of *Moses* (the Copy whereof is different from ours) as their *entire Scripture*; which is very true, and their *Schism*, and idolatrous Worship, may be assign'd as the Reason of it*.

This *Pentateuch* they received from the *Jews*, and had they made any great Alteration in it, the *Jews* would have laid it to their Charge, which we do not find they did.

And it appears from the Collation of the Book itself, with the *Hebrew*, that it has little or no Difference.

There are, indeed, some Variations, and some wilful Corruptions in it, as that in particular about *Mount Gerizim*: But there is no Foundation in the Difference there is between the *Samaritan* and the *Hebrew*, to insinuate they are not the same Books;

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and

* *Vide Proleg. II. in Bibl. Polyglot. Sect. 9.*

24 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

and that consequently it cannot be known, whether they are not both equally false.

Some of the most material Corruptions of the *Samaritans Pentateuch* seem to have been occasioned by their Controversies with the *Jews*. But the small Variation of the *Samaritan Pentateuch* from the *Hebrew* for above 2000 Years, whilst these Nations were Enemies, is a most convincing Proof, that the *Jewish* Bibles have been preserved with great Exactness.

To proceed to what is next objected — We are told, that the *Rabbies* receive for Scripture the twenty-four Books of the *Old Testament*; and that to these the Priests of the *Roman Church*, and the Protestants add all the *New*; but the Church of *Rome* receives the *Apocrypha*, which all Protestant Churches reject, but the Church of *England*, which pays some Regard to them.

But I will shew, that those Controversies, which are among Christians, are no just Objection against Christianity itself.

Are we, because there are some Difficulties in determining the Number of the Scripture Books, some rejecting those as spurious, which others receive as genuine, to reject all, and conclude that there is no Book at all which has any just Pretence to divine Authority?

This seems to be the Drift of these Men; and yet it was never looked upon as any Argument, that no Books were wrote by those, whose Names they bear, because some has been falsely ascribed to them.

But, supposing these Matters were more uncertain, the Truth of Christianity does not depend upon the Time when these Books were formally put into one Body, and universally receiv'd; but upon the Facts related in those Books, which, if true, as we have proved, Christianity is established, and true. And the Gospels, and St. *Paul's* Epistles,

pistles, which give us a full View of Christianity, were received from the Beginning.

But, supposing we are agreed about what Books are to be received for Scripture; yet we differ, it seems, about the Authority of Scripture, and the Degrees of Inspiration with which these Books are penn'd. So that we know not what Credit, or whether any is due.

Now, I cannot see, that the Truth of Christianity will suffer, if we allow no more than this, that the Authors of the Books were Men of Honesty and common Abilities. For why might they not transmit down the Life and Doctrine of Christ, whom they constantly follow'd, and saw all his Works, as well as other Historians, what they relate. There was nothing they could propose to themselves by falsifying their Accounts; and, if they had attempted it, they would have been discovered, since the Things were then publickly known.

Their Writings have all the Marks of Sincerity that can be desired; and, if we give Credit to any History, we cannot deny it to the Gospel; and, if the History of the Gospel be true, the Christian Religion is founded on divine Revelation, and demands our Assent, as coming from God.

But admitting the Scriptures are of undoubted Authority; How shall we know that they are not alter'd from what they were when they were first written?

Several Doubts are rais'd upon this Head.

We are told of a Design in the sixth Century of *Anastasius* the Emperor, of making a general Alteration of the four Gospels. This is recorded by *Victor Tununensis*, who lived at that Time. His Words are — at *Constantinople* in the Consulship of *Messalla*, at the Command of the Emperor *Anastasius*, the Holy Gospels, as written by plain, unartful Evangelists, are corrected, and amended.

In

26 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

In answer to this Objection, I observe,

1. That the Truth of this History rests upon the sole Credit of one Author. For *Isidorus Hispalensis*, in his *Chronicon*, has only transcribed *Victor's* Words.

2. It does not appear, from *Victor's* Words, that it was any Thing else than a Design of new publishing the Gospels in a more pure and polite Language: And this might be done without any Detriment to the Gospel, the Originals of which might remain in their native Plainness. Of this Nature are the Versions and Paraphrases made on the *New Testament*, and are of great Use for the understanding the Text.

3. Whatever this Design upon the Gospels was, it does not appear it was put in Execution. For if it had been published, it would have set the *East* in a Flame, as much less Matters frequently did, and endanger'd the Emperor himself.

4. Had this been a Design to corrupt the Purity of the Gospel, the Historians of that Time, who are so particular in describing the other Villanies of *Anastasius*, would have left this upon Record, as a standing Monument of his Infamy. But no Mention is made of this by them.

5. Besides the Silence of History, we have another more convincing Argument, that no such Gospel did ever appear. For the *Greek* and *Latin* Writers before *Anastasius's* Time are full of Citations out of the *New Testament*, and yet their Citations agree with the present MSS. which is a Demonstration that the whole *New Testament* has continued the same, since *Anastasius's* Time, as before.

The same appears from the entire Commentaries, and Versions which were made of the *New Testament* before *Anastasius's* Time, which all agree with the present Copies.

Lastly,

Lastly, The Gospels do not appear like a Book mended, and polished by a Scholar; the Style is plain, and simple, and unaffected: There is no Rhetoric in it, but the Narration is carried on in the most common and vulgar Expressions. The Writers profess only to deliver plain Matters of Facts, and this ought to confirm our Belief of the Truth of them.

And thus I have fully confuted this pretended Alteration of the Gospels under *Anastasius*.

But this is no new Device of the Enemies of Christianity, to charge the Scriptures with being forged, when they had no other Way to confute them.

Thus *Porphry*, when he was pressed with some of *Daniel's* Prophecies, as undeniable Proofs of the prophetic Spirit in the holy Writers, pretends they were forged by some Jew after the Times of *Alexander* and *Antiochus*. But he offers no Proof; and *Josephus* says, that the Jews received no Writing into their Canon, that was composed after the finishing of the second Temple.

Which therefore is to be believed? *Josephus*, who speaks of his own Knowledge, or *Porphry*, who was a Stranger to the Jewish Books?

'Tis impossible to prove any Fact if a bare, positive Alteration, or an obscure Passage shall be allowed to out-weight the Records of a Nation, and the Authority of the best Historians.

This is the true State of the Case, and all the Force of such Arguments as these; and whether this be *Free-thinking* and fair Examination, or false Reasoning and Thinking with Prejudice, I leave to any one to judge.

There is, therefore, no Reason from any Thing which has as yet been urged, why we should look upon the Gospel as a *cunningly devised Fable*.

But further, tho' the Gospel be not totally alter'd, yet it is said, that it has been corrupted,
and

28 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

and suffer'd more from various Readings than any other Book.

But whoever considers this closely, will find, that no Author has suffer'd so little.

I might argue, that since God designed it for a Rule of Life, his Goodness would not suffer it to be corrupted in any essential Points, wherein the Salvation of Men was concerned.

This general Argument ought to satisfy any reasonable Person, that the Alterations and various Readings do none of them affect the main Design of these Writings, which was to convey down to us the true Religion. The Compilers of these Writings were divine Persons, endued with miraculous Gifts, or directed by such.

And tho' there is no Occasion to suppose the Writers inspired in every Thought and Word, yet 'tis reasonable to suppose they were hindred from falling into any gross Errors; and that they were kept from omitting any necessary Point which our Saviour taught them, and from adding any Thing as necessary which he did not make so: And that they did not pervert his Meaning, but deliver'd it in their Writings the same which he taught.

In like Manner, tho' there be no Occasion to suppose that God should work a Miracle to preserve their Writings from all Manner of Change, yet we may reasonably suppose, that if a particular Providence was necessary to preserve them from any material Corruption, they have been providentially so preserved: And if this be admitted, which cannot be said of any other Writings, the Scriptures have suffer'd less than other Writings.

But let us, for the present, put the Scriptures upon the same Foot with other Writings, and I doubt not but they will appear freer from Corruptions than them.

The

The Argument that is brought to prove the Spuriousness of our present *Bibles* is this---- That all Copies differ more or less from one another; that the various Readings amount to above thirty thousand; and that if all Copies could be collated, the Number of various Readings would be much increased.

All these various Readings are falsely represented, as so many Corruptions of the original Text.

Now in Vindication of the Purity of the Scriptures, and of the Labours of those who have collected these various Readings, several Things are to be consider'd.

1. That since the Originals have been lost, the real Text itself of the sacred Writings, does not lie in any single Copy, but is dispersed in them all, and that it cannot be retriev'd without collating them all. Tho' the most faulty Copy is capable of answering the End for which Scripture was given.

2. These various Readings were impossible to be avoided, being the necessary Consequence of taking Transcripts from the first Originals, and afterwards from those Transcripts, and so on.

'Tis probable, indeed, that those Copies which were lodged in particular Churches, were collated with great Care, and as exactly agreed with the Originals as possible; but then these, in Tract of Time, were lost, and supply'd by others less perfect.

3. Hence it appears how falsely they are charged with corrupting the Text, who have labour'd in collecting these various Readings; for these were in Being before they were collected, and if Religion was then true, it is the same now these various Readings are collected.

4. Since the Originals are lost, the more Copies we have, the more likely we shall be of arriving at the very Words of the original Text. But

the

30 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

the more Copies we have, the more will the various Readings be increased. And therefore,

5. The various Readings are so far from corrupting the Text, that they fix the true Reading, and explain obscure Passages.

The great Number of different Copies of the ancient Authors has always been esteem'd a Service in setting forth a correct Edition; and the Reason why some of those Authors are so corrupt, is, that there are few Copies to correct their Faults.

And the Reason why the *New Testament* is in a better Condition than any other ancient Book, is upon Account of the great Number of Copies, and various Reading thence arising. And if all the Copies were got together, and accurately collated, our Bibles would be still more correct. We see then, that as the Case now stands with the Scriptures, and since the Originals are long since lost, what is complain'd of as a Prejudice, is rather an Advantage.

6. The various Readings in other ancient Authors do in Proportion far exceed those of the *New Testament* *.

To which, I believe, we may add, that there have been more Copies of the *New Testament* than of any other Book, and so more various Readings. And then it will follow, that the *New Testament* has suffer'd less than any other Book.

7. From the great Number of Copies of the *New Testament*, which have been dispersed, the Book has been preserv'd from being abolished or corrupted; whereas, had there been but some few single Copies of these Books lodged in some private Hands, this, indeed, would have made Room for Fraud, and given just Suspicion. But as long as the Copies were dispersed thro' all Hands, they made all Attempts of this Nature impossible. The

* *Vide Philelutherus Lipsiensis*, in his Remarks upon Free-thinking, pag. 64.

The Enemies of Christianity could not corrupt the Scriptures themselves, nor charge the Friends of Christianity with any such Thing. And whoever did this, was sure to be quickly discovered and complain'd of.

8. After all, the various Reading are rather a Matter of Curiosity than real Use; and there are very few Places where there are any considerable Alterations made in the Sense of them by the various Readings.

But if there should be any Passage of a Book corrupted beyond Retrieve, or a whole Book entirely lost, the Wisdom of God has so ordered the Scriptures, that we may find the Matters of great Moment in the several other Books.

Upon the Whole, therefore, we may justly conclude, that the original Texts are not corrupted either by *Jews, Christians*, or others.

I come now to answer another Objection of the *Free-thinkers*, viz. that the Scriptures are dark and obscure; and that we are destitute of sufficient Means to understand them.

“ The Priests, say they, not only of every different Sect, but even of the same, differ endlessly in Opinion about the Sense and Meaning of these Books.”

This, indeed, is a good Reason why every Man should study the Scriptures with great Care; but 'tis no argument that there is nothing certainly laid down for Truth in Scripture, or that 'tis impossible for us to know what is so.

For Priests no more differ about the Sense of Scripture, than learned Men do about the Sense of other ancient Writings. But was it ever thought a good Reason not to study Antiquity, because some who have made it their Study, have differ'd in their Explications of some Things. The more Explications the better; and yet there

there will be a greater Variety of Opinion for this Reason.

The Case is the same with Respect to the Scriptures, which as they have been more studied and commented upon than any other Book, so there have been more Variety of Interpretations put upon several Passages upon them. But for this Reason we are better furnished with Helps to understand them, than any other Book. Several excellent Treatises have been written upon this Subject, containing general Rules for the interpreting of Scripture, besides numberless useful Commentaries upon each Book, adapted to the meanest Capacities.

The Scriptures, in the main, are to be interpreted by the same Rules which we observe in studying other Books. Thus far the Scriptures stand upon the same Bottom with other Writings; and whatever Reason can be urged to dissuade us from attempting to read them, will hold as strongly against reading and studying any ancient Author whatsoever.

But the Scriptures have the Advantage of all other Writings in Point of Plainness, in that they were written by God's Appointment and Direction to instruct Man in all Things necessary to Salvation. From whence we may conclude, that the Scriptures, in all necessary Points, are plain to every impartial and diligent Enquirer.

That God can speak his Mind plainly is certain; and that he has done so in those Things we are to believe is equally certain. So that those Places of Scripture, where God would have his Meaning known, are so plain, that all Men of common Capacities may understand them. For it is consistent with his Reason to speak obscurely upon those Heads where he would be understood: And 'tis repugnant to his Justice to require Men to know what he has not plainly reveal'd.

Now,

Now, that there are many Things in Scripture very plain is undeniable; such are these,

That God is a Spirit, a Being of all Perfections; Infinite, Eternal, Omnipresent, the Governor of the World, All Knowing, All Mighty, Infinitely Holy, Pure, Just, Good, and Merciful; a Friend to Piety, and Virtue, an Enemy to all Wickedness, a Rewarder of them that serve him, and a Punisher of those who offend him; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Messiah, and Saviour of the World; that he was born in a miraculous Manner; that he was put to Death, and rose again; that he ascended into Heaven, and sitteth at the Right Hand of God; that he has all Power given him in Heaven and in Earth; that he is to be Judge of Mankind; that all Men shall rise again at the last Day; that they who believe and obey the Gospel shall be saved; and they who reject and disobey it shall be damned.

And then as to the Matters of Sin and Duty, they are so plain, that Men of ordinary Capacities, by their own Care, in Conjunction with other Helps which are in their Power, may come to the Knowledge of them.

If therefore the Gospel be hid, it is to such as are blinded by the Devil and their Lusts.

If Men study the Scriptures with a sincere Desire to know the Truth, and to practise whatever they find to be their Duty, God would never leave them destitute of Means sufficient for the understanding all Things necessary to Salvation.

The Scriptures were designed to influence Men's Hearts and Affections; and therefore such *moral* Qualifications as I have mention'd, are necessary to prepare Men for a right understanding of them. Men never disbelieve the Scriptures, but by those Sins, and unlawful Pleasures, which that Book condemns; these are the great Impediments to the Understanding; remove but these out of the Way,

and we shall soon discover Truth, and find it agreeable to us.

If we resolve to make the Scriptures the Rule of Life, tho' there may remain, after all our Study, some Things we shall never fully understand, yet we shall not fail of understanding so much as will *make us wise unto Salvation*.

But if Men come to read the Scriptures with corrupt Passions, and Aversions to Truth, they will neither be diligent in searching for it, nor be willing to receive it, if they should find it. Those Things which are plain, will be obscure to them, and while they have another Interest on Foot, different from the Truth, either their Eyes will be blinded, or else they will *handle the Word of God deceitfully*, and pervert the Meaning of the Text into the Service of that Cause which they have already espoused.

Besides, where Men read the Scriptures not to find the Meaning of the Holy Spirit, but to raise groundless Objections, God does often not only suffer such Persons to be *taken in their own Craftiness*, but does moreover smite them with a *judicial Blindness*, and *Hardness of Heart*.

Whether the Free-thinkers study the Scriptures with these ill Designs they best know. But I shall shew hereafter, that there seems to be some Infatuation in those gross Mistakes they have committed in interpreting Scripture.

To close this Point : Notwithstanding all the Difficulties there are in the Bible, there are an hundred plain Texts for one that is obscure; and all Things either useful or necessary to Salvation, are clearly delivered, and easily understood by every one, who is willing to learn.

I grant, as Matters now stand in the World, 'tis necessary that the publick Teachers should be competently skill'd in human Learning, in order to defend the Truth of their Religion against its Opposers:

fers: But this is a consequential Necessity, and does not directly follow from the inherent Difficulty of understanding the Bible, which, in the main, lies level to the common Capacities of Men.

But if the Scriptures be thus plain, how comes it to pass that the World is so full of Controversies about religious Matters, and of so many different Opinions so hotly maintain'd?

To which I answer, this is easily accounted for from the Nature of Things. Is there any thing about which there have not been a Variety of Opinions? And is not this as evident in other Professions as well as Divinity?

But this was never esteem'd an Argument, that there was nothing to be depended upon in these Matters.

On the contrary, notwithstanding the Variety of Opinions in every Art and Profession, there are many Things wherein all are agreed. And so it is in Religion, where, tho' there be many Disputes, yet the most material Things have never been denied, but by weak Heads or wicked Hearts.

Religion, however, has the Advantage in this Respect above all other Parts of Knowledge, since we have a more certain Way of ending all Controversies in Religion necessary to be ended, than in ending Controversies about any other Subject, as appears from what has been said, if Men would read the Scriptures with honest Hearts, and beg the Assistance of God's holy Spirit.

But let us enquire more particularly what these Controversies are, and how they affect Religion.

And here several Things are to be observed.

I. There being no more Disputes about Religion than about other Subjects, they can affect Religion no more than they do other Subjects.

In every thing that is controverted something must be taken to be true; even the Sceptic must allow this at least, that *there is nothing certain* in order

36 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

to justify his Conduct; and by the same Means that they come to the Knowledge of this Truth, they may come to the Knowledge of others, which is sufficient to destroy the Foundation of universal Scepticism.

2. The Disputes about Religion are not about the Foundation of Religion, therefore do not destroy it.

The general Principles of Religion are the same with the Principles of Reason, by which we are able to judge of the Truth or Falshood of any thing propos'd to us.

When any thing is proposed to us which we can discern no Foundation in Reason to affirm or deny, we ought to leave it in Doubt; but this is not the Case of the Principles of natural Religion, such as, the Being and Providence of God; the Difference of Good and Evil; the Distinction of Matter and Spirit; which result from the most evident Principles of Reason. But,

3. To come to revealed Religion; Christianity stands upon such Propositions as are the plain Principles of Reason and natural Religion.

That God can make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind is highly probable; and that he actually made such a Revelation to the first Christians, we have such Evidence from the highest Principles of historical Faith, as puts the Matter beyond all Doubt.

So that unless the Truth of the Gospel History could be disproved, the Grounds of Christianity stand unmoved, notwithstanding all the Disputes about it.

4. The Disputes then so much complained of, cannot concern the Foundation of Christianity, but must respect some particular Doctrines, and render them uncertain; and upon that Account unfit to be insisted upon as Doctrines of Christianity.

These Doctrines are falsely said to be fundamental,

tal, and from thence it is falsely inferr'd, that there is nothing certain in Christianity.

If we take the whole Body of the Christian Religion as laid down in modern Systems of Divinity, tho' every Point of Christianity, as explain'd in those Systems, should be disproved, Christianity would not be affected by such Disputes, but only human Explications of it.

And if this be the Case of Christianity in general, much more will it hold of any particular Doctrines of it.

The Free-thinkers tell us, that the most fundamental Doctrine of Christianity is the Trinity. But it remains to be proved that this Doctrine, consider'd under any human Explication, is any Fundamental at all.

The *Resurrection* also is not a fundamental Article, under any of those Explications, which have been given of it.

For it signifies nothing what Matter the Body shall be composed of, when it shall rise again, if the Soul finds, and knows itself to be the same it was before.

The Free-thinkers tell us further, That some *question whether we shall rise with any Body*, who these are I know not; but whoever they are, they must deny Revelation.

5. That if all the Disputes in Religion were narrowly looked into, the greatest Part of them would be found to be such, as did not concern the Substance of our Faith. For it is not so much the Truth of the Things, that is disputed, as the Manner of them. We may be assured of the Truth of many Things which we are not able to explain; and therefore our being unable to give a rational Account of the *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, and the *Resurrection* of the Body, is no Reason why we should reject these Truths; nor are Men's different Explications of them any Argument that they are false.

And yet all the Disputes in Religion, so much complained of, especially those which the *Free-thinkers* have produced, are of this Kind; they do not concern any Articles of our Faith, but relate to the different Explication which Men have given of them. And if there be any of these Disputes, which seem to affect the Substance of our Faith, they do it by remote Consequences, which, as they are disclaim'd by both Parties, 'tis uncharitable to charge upon them.

This one Consideration would reduce the disputed Part of Religion into a much narrower Compass, than that which the *Free-thinkers* represent it in.

Indeed this Consideration is applicable to Controversies of all Kinds, as well as those of Religion. (See *Lock's Essay*, Book II. Chap. 13. Sect. 27. ----- Book III. Chap. 10. Sect. 22. ----- Book III. Chap. 11. Sect. 6, 7.) These Passages are very remarkable, and give us a very just Notion of the Nature, Origin, and Value of Controversies in general. But they are more applicable to religious Controversies than any other. For what is commonly made the Subject of religious Controversies, being often such Things as we have no adequate Ideas of, and for which we want proper Expressions; this will occasion greater Obscurity, than in those Subjects of which we have juster Ideas, and are better supplied with apt Words to express our Thoughts.

6. 'Tis further to be observed, that many of these Disputes arise from nothing but from Men's different Ways of expressing themselves, from their misunderstanding one another, and mistaking the Question in Dispute, and vanish as soon as they come to explain their Meaning.

Lastly, Were the Disputes among Christians never so many, they ought not to stagger our Faith, but rather confirm us in it, because they were expressly

presly foretold, *Luke* xii. 51. *Rom.* xvi. 17. and are therefore an Argument for the Truth of it. And this Argument is so much the stronger if we consider what little Reason there was from the Nature of Christianity to expect any such Disputes.

The Plainness of the Gospel would, one would think, prevent all Disputes about it, if Men were not resolved to dispute every thing.

There are such excellent Rules of Unity and Peace prescribed in the Gospel, and enforced with such Motives, as might make Men of one Mind. And yet the same Spirit, from whence these Rules proceeded, foretold these Disputes, so that they cannot be objected against the Truth of that Revelation in which they are foretold.

To which I might add, that these Disputes are very serviceable to the Cause of Truth, by making Men contend earnestly for that Faith, which was once deliver'd to the Saints.

And this, I hope, may suffice to shew, that notwithstanding all the religious Disputes, the Christian Revelation is true; and every Man, who desires it, has sufficient Means of being assured of the Certainty of it.

I have now gone through the first Rule laid down, which was, to possess ourselves with a sincere Love of Truth for its own Sake, and have shown that the Free-thinkers are very deficient in it. The

Second Rule was, not to be afraid of Truth, or any of the Consequences of it. And this is a Rule which the Free-thinkers have transgressed as much as the former. For whenever Men give greater Degrees of Assent to some Propositions, and less to others, than the Proofs they are built upon will warrant, this cannot proceed from nothing but their loving some Truths, and fearing others.

Tho' all Truths, as such, be of the same Nature,

ture, yet some Truths are of greater Consequence than others.

This is the Case of religious Truths, and this is the Reason why Men will not submit to the Evidence there, which they yield to in other Cases.

These Truths determine our eternal Happiness or Misery, according as we conform, or do not conform to them. And, therefore, Men who will not live agreeably to these Truths, must dread them, and wish Religion was false; and this will make them stand out against the strongest Arguments and clearest Proofs.

If the great Truths of Religion were only Matters of pure Speculation, they would readily yield their Assent to them.

But, alas! these Things affect our greatest Interest; if there be a God, he will be a *Rewarder of all that diligently seek him*, and severe Revenger of all who despise him. If the Soul be immortal, and there be indeed another Life after this, then the Righteous shall enjoy a blessed Immortality, and the Wicked shall be turned into Hell.

The Truths of Religion, upon Account of these Consequences, are very dreadful; and, therefore, Men who won't live agreeably to them, will do all they can not to believe them.

I doubt not but Mathematical Truths would be called in Question by some Men, if they were of the same Consequence with those of Religion; but because they do not forbid them to gratify their Lusts, they readily assent to them; and yet the Principles of Religion are as capable of Proof in their Kind as the other.

So that Scepticism and Infidelity may, among other Causes, be justly ascribed to a Dread of religious Truths, and the Consequences of them.

The *third* Rule which I laid down as necessary to be observed in this Matter, was, to pursue our Enquiries with the utmost Sincerity and Impartiality.

But

But there is nothing wherein the Free-thinkers have more shamefully fallen short of the Character which they pretend to, than in this.

Their Prejudice and Partiality appears plainly from the Management of their Arguments, and the Methods they have used to undermine Religion. Sometimes they represent the gravest Things in the most ridiculous Drefs.

At other Times they betake themselves to Reflections, and think to render Religion odious, by exposing and raking up together the Follies and Imprudences, and ridiculous Opinions of the Professors of it.

But what is all this to the Purpose, the Truth of the Christian Revelation does not depend upon what is said or wrote now, but upon what was done many Ages ago. The best Cause may fall into weak Hands, and therefore we should consider what the ablest, as well as the weakest Advocates have to say for it.

If any modern Writer has drawn up an absurd Scheme of Christianity, or given a false Explication of any particular Doctrine of it, that to be sure with these Men is Christianity itself; and if they can but overthrow these Schemes and Explications, then Christianity is overthrown.

I have already mentioned this unfair Way of proceeding in the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, which even under such an Explication, as they can never believe to be a true one, they are pleased to call the most fundamental Doctrine of Christianity.

They tell us also, that *original Sin* is the most fundamental Doctrine of the Christian Religion; so that according to them the Doctrine of *original Sin* is the Foundation of the Doctrine of the *Trinity*; and under that particular Explication of it, which they have singled out. But this is very unfair to make Religion itself suffer for the Follies of those who profess it. And yet this is the Way of
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42 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

the Free-thinkers, who have not only picked out the weakest Things that have been said by Christians, but have grossly misrepresented, or shamefully mistaken their Meaning, of which I shall give some Instances.

The first Instance I shall mention, is, their Quotation from Bishop *Taylor*, which, say they *, gives us an Idea of the Nature of our Books, and their Design in producing that Passage, is, to give us such an Idea of the Obscurity of the Scriptures, as to make us think it impossible for us to gather any thing with Certainty out of them. This is plainly the Scope of the Passage. But whoever considers the main Scope either of the Book † out of which that Passage is taken, or of the Passage itself, will quickly find, that it was far from the Bishop's Meaning to magnify the Difficulty of understanding the Scriptures. On the contrary, he expressly maintains, that the Scriptures are sufficiently plain in all necessary Points.

Again, § Christianity is represented as falling short of *Epicurus's* Morality in Point of Friendship. And here, again, the Bishop is brought in as maintaining this Charge against Christianity. But both Christianity and the Bishop are grossly misrepresented.

For, though the Word *Friendship* is not to be found in the *New Testament* in the same Sense, which human Writings put upon it, yet the Virtue itself is to be there found, and is carried to a higher Pitch than in any of the Heathen Moralists. For is not that universal Love which we are to bear towards all Men, the most noble Instance of Friendship? Was not our Saviour the greatest Friend the World ever had? And does not his Doctrin

* Discourse of Free-thinking, pag. 18.

† Liberty of prophesying, Sect. 3.

§ A Discourse of the Nature and Offices of Friendship.

trine tend to introduce universal Friendship among Men?

How shameful then is it for these Men to misrepresent the Gospel in such a Manner?

As to Bishop *Taylor*, whom they have misrepresented, immediately after the Passage which they have quoted, he has these Words.

But by Friendships, I suppose, you mean the greatest Love, and the greatest Usefulness, and the most open Communication, and the most noble Sufferings, and the most exemplary Faithfulness, and the severest Truth, and the heartiest Counsel, and the greatest Union of Minds, of which brave Men and Women are capable; but then, I must tell you, that Christianity calls this Charity, and Christian Charity is Friendship to all the World.

We see then what becomes of the Word *Friendship*; the Thing itself, the Duty meant by it, makes the brightest Part of the Gospel, and was practised in far greater Perfection by *Christ* and his Followers, than by *Epicurus*, or any of his *Free-thinking* Sect.

The next great Man whom they have abused is Archbishop *Tillotson*, whom they have ranked with *Epicurus* and *Hobbs*. His exposing the Weakness and Folly of Atheism, Scepticism, and Infidelity, has made them Enemies to his Memory.

As his exposing Popish Zeal, and Bigotry, and spiritual Tyranny, has occasion'd his being called the *gravest Atheist that ever was*.

Next to their Misrepresentation of the best Christian Divine, is their gross Abuse of the best Heathen Moralist, I mean *Cicero*, whom they have endeavour'd to discredit, by putting him into the same List with *Aristotle* and *Epicurus*, whose impious Opinions he has fully confuted.

They have endeavour'd to represent him as denying the Immortality of the Soul, tho' there is no
one

44 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

one Point he more constantly maintains. *Vide Cato Major, & Somnium Scipionis.*

My Lord *Bacon* is another Authority which the Free-thinkers would gain to their Side, to which Purpose they have misrepresented his Meaning. They tell us this following Passage has explain'd the whole Secret of Superstition, viz. *Veruntamen eadem natura modum tenere nescia est, sed timoribus salutaribus semper vanos & inanes admiscet*; which they have thus honestly translated--*And yet this Nature knows not how to keep a Mean, but always intermixeth vain and empty Fears.*

Thus he is made by these Men to represent all *Fears* as idle; whereas he expressly mentions *timores salutare*, by which we may justly suppose he meant the Fear of God and of a future State.

But as they have abused these Men, so they have Scripture; of which I shall mention two remarkable Instances.

The first is that of the Prophets, whom they call great Free-thinkers, and tell us, that they have written with as great Liberty against the Jewish Religion, and the Priests, as if they believed it was all Imposture.

Whereas they never wrote against the established Religion of the Jews; they only reprov'd their corrupt Practices, and Hypocrisy; their preferring the external Performances of Religion to inward Piety, in which they were encouraged by the false Doctrine and bad Examples of their Priests, whose Degeneracy the Prophets severely reprove.

The other Instance of their Abuse of Scripture, is their representing *Solomon* as an Infidel, as asserting the Eternity of the World, and denying a future State. But this only shows their Ignorance of *Solomon's* Sense, if not something worse.

For his *Ecclesiastes* is written by Way of Dialogue, as they may see if they will consult *Pool*, *Gataker*, or *Patrick*. And those Passages they have produced

produced in Favour of their Free-thinking, *i. e.* Infidelity, are not the Words of *Solomon*, but what he puts into the Mouths of Atheists, which he confutes in other Parts of that Book.

After they had charged *Solomon* with denying the Immortality of the Soul, they tell us first, *that the Reason was, that that Doctrine was no where plain in the Old Testament.*

Indeed, it being no express Part of the *Mosaical* Law, I believe, the common People were ignorant of it. But the great Men, the Patriarchs and Prophets, had Knowledge of this Truth. *Solomon* himself tells us, *that the Righteous hath Hope in his Death*, which Words have no Meaning, but upon the Supposition of a future State.

Even in this *Free-thinking* Book of *Ecclesiastes* this Passage shews his Belief of this great Article. *Rejoice, O young Man, in thy Youth, but know thou that for all these Things God will bring thee into Judgment.*

And he closes his Book with this serious Admonition — *Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good, or bad.*

But the best Vindication of *Solomon's* Ignorance is still behind. They tell us, that so wise a Man as *Solomon* might deny so important a Truth, because it was *denied by the Sadducees, the most philosophical Part of the Jewish Nation; and was thought doubtful by most Sects of the Grecian Philosophers, and denied by the Stoicks.*

Now let us see how the Argument stands---*Solomon* who was the wisest of Men, and divinely inspired, might well be ignorant of the Immortality of the Soul, because the *Sadducees*, who lived many hundred Years after, when Inspiration ceased, and who had not the Tithes of his Wisdom, were ignorant of it.

Again, *Solomon* might well be ignorant of so important

46 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

portant a Truth, because it was thought *doubtful* by Grecian Philosophers, and denied by the Stoicks, Sects that did not arise till many Ages after Solomon, and so could not influence his Sentiments.

What has been said may suffice to shew how little the Free-thinkers have regarded the *third* Rule, which was, to pursue our Enquiries with the utmost Sincerity and Impartiality.

I proceed now to the *fourth* Rule, in our Enquiry after Truth, which was, to use all proper Helps which God has afforded us.

In Points where we have only the Light of Reason to guide us, we must hearken to Reason: But where God has revealed his Will, we must consult the Scriptures, where his Will is contained, and not pretend to determine those Points barely by Reason, which Revelation has determin'd, much less determine contrary to Revelation.

This is one Thing, for which the *Free-thinkers* are highly to be blamed, they pretend not to be Enemies to revealed Religion, and yet they are for discarding all Use of it, and trusting to their own Reason; thus they would determine what Laws God gave to *Jews* and *Christians* by considering only what appears reasonable to them to be enacted, without considering either the *Jewish* or *Christian* Revelation, and resolve Religion into what appears to them for the Good of Society.

Now, tho' I believe, that God has made nothing a general Law, but what is for the Good of Mankind, which is the Case of all moral Duties; yet it is Presumption for us to conclude, that any particular Laws cannot be of God, because we cannot conceive, at present, how they are for our Good.

It becomes us to say, that the infinite wise God hath enacted such Laws; and therefore, it is our Interest to observe them; and not presumptuously to

to say, that 'tis best for Men to observe such Laws; and, therefore, God has obliged them to obey such only. For God may require indifferent Things as a Trial of our Obedience. And since the Scriptures contain the Will and Laws of God, we must have Recourse to them for the Knowledge of our Duty.

Now, tho' most of God's Laws are calculated for the Good of Society, yet this is not the principal End of all his Laws, and consequently not the true Ground of all Morality. Nor is this a Rule to judge whether Laws be of God, or not. For supposing God to reveal to us a future eternal State, 'tis reasonable to think that his Laws should be principally calculated with Regard to that State; that they should be such as may make us easy here, and fit us for eternal Happiness hereafter. And this is the Case of Laws that relate to our Duty towards God, and our selves: Not but that they tend, tho' not principally, to the Good of Society too; and, upon Supposition of such an eternal State, such Laws are worthy of God. Besides this, the Wisdom of God may judge it useful to Men to enjoin them some significant Rites, such as the two Sacraments are. Or if God thinks fit to act as a temporal King, as he did over the *Jews*, what Wonder is it, if he gives them Laws civil and ecclesiastical, suited to their particular State, as he did to them. So that the Good of human Society is not an adequate Rule to judge of all Laws, that are pretended to be of God.

According to the same Rule, *viz.* the Good of human Society, the Free-thinkers judge of the Sinfulness of human Actions, and the Degrees of that Sinfulness.

Upon these Principles nothing is to be esteem'd wicked but what destroys the public Peace, which justifies such a Freedom of Action, as is inconsistent

48 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

sent with Religion. That *Labour of Love*, that religious Industry, which we are commanded to practise, according to these Principles, is no better than Folly and Deceit; and that upon Account of the uncertain Issue of Things. And this is agreeable to the *Free-thinkers*, who because they have not a demonstrative Assurance of every Thing, are resolved to give their Assent to nothing. But this is a base Ingratitude to God, who has bestowed upon us such a Portion of Knowledge, as is sufficient for the great Ends of our Being, and to answer the Design of our being sent hither.

'Tis some Advantage to us to know as much as we do, tho' our best Reason is imperfect; and we must be thankful for it, and make the best Use of it we are able. That Revelation, which God hath given us, is, in many Points, short of what our Curiosity might prompt us to wish for; but it is sufficient to inform us in all Things necessary to be known, either to direct, or encourage us in our Duty. And God has more than intimated to us, that it is in vain to carry our Enquiries in religious Matters beyond those Discoveries he has made; and that we please him best, when we confine our Enquiries to those Things which most concern us, and which we are most able to know, from that Revelation which he has made to us, *Deut. xxix. 29.*

And this is in itself the best Method of arriving at Knowledge to consider our own Strength, and to chuse such Things as we are most concerned to know, and may undertake with some Hopes of Success, with those Helps God has afforded us; and not to think freely after a rambling desultory Manner, upon every Thing that offers itself to us, whether we are like to make any Thing of it, or no. For, 'tis evident, we are not equal to all Undertakings of this Kind, and therefore we should not exercise ourselves in Matters above us. (*To this*

this Purpose see Lock's Essay, B. I. c. 1. Sect. 6, 7.)

Again, the *Free-thinkers* reject all Manner of Guides; tho', 'tis certain, Men may reap great Advantage from Guides and Teachers: For, as 'tis impossible for any one Man, but a *Free-thinker*, to be Master of all Arts, so they who have applied themselves most to any particular Study, and whose Profession it is, may reasonably be presum'd to be better skill'd in it, than those who have not.

And tho' none of this Person's Advice is to be implicitly follow'd, where it is manifestly wrong, yet 'tis Prudence to follow it, where I cannot understand so much of the Matter, as they; and even there I would use my Judgment, as far as it would go.

So also in Divinity: Tho' a Layman who has made that his Study, may certainly know as much of it as a Doctor of Divinity; yet they, whose peculiar Business it is to study the Scriptures, may reasonably be supposed to know more of the Matter, than they who do not make it their Employment. And tho' no Man should blindly follow the Priests, yet surely their Assistance is as useful in Matters relating to their Profession, as a skilful Physician's is in his.

But here it is objected, that in Matters of Divinity we cannot act by a Deputy, as we may in Physic. Besides, if I follow the Physician's Judgment, the worst that can happen, is, the Loss of my Life. But, if I trust a Priest who is in the Wrong, I am supposed to be eternally damned.

To which I answer, that as in Matters of Divinity no Man can be saved by another's Faith, so no Man can be well by the Health of his Physician, without following their Directions.

But, if any Man be ignorant of any necessary

Point of Faith, or Facts, in any fundamental Rule in Life, when he might have been better informed, and knew where to be instructed, he will be punish'd for his Contempt of those Means of Instruction, which God had provided. And if any Man refuses his Physician's Advice, he will suffer for it.

Well, but the worst I can suffer here, is, the Loss of my Life; but *if I trust to a Priest, who is in the Wrong, I am supposed to be damned.*

But this is a false Supposition; for if a Man trusts a Priest in Cases he finds himself unable to determine, and the Priest happens to be in the Wrong, he will not be eternally damn'd; but if the Priest wilfully deceives him, he will be damn'd.

Notwithstanding, therefore, any Thing alledged to the contrary, the Case is parallel, and we may as well reject all Guides in every Thing else, as well as Divinity.

And, the Consequence of this will be, that we must lay aside Books as well as Men, and think freely for our selves; so that all Improvements in several Parts of Learning, from the Beginning of the World, to this Time, are of no Use.

But yet, after all, tho' they are so much against Guides, yet they will obtrude themselves as Guides to others; for they will allow none to be of the Number of *Free-thinkers*, unless they acquiesce in their determining what Evidence is a sufficient Ground of Belief, and their prescribing how far, and in what Cases they may give or withhold their Assent.

5. The last Rule I laid down as necessary to be observed in our Enquiries after Truth, was, a firm Resolution to embrace it, whenever we find it, and yield ourselves up to it, and be govern'd by it.

There

Private Judgment, or Free-thinking. 51

There cannot be much said upon this Head ; because the *Free-thinkers* Business is, to *think* themselves out of all Truth, and to introduce universal Scepticism.

They do not pretend to discover any Truth, but to disprove whatever has been received for such. Their Business is, to cast down old Foundations, not to build up any new in their Room.

I come now in the

Third Place, to shew, that private Judgment in Matters of Religion, and Free-thinking, properly so called, is not only every Man's Right, but 'tis every Man's Duty.

As we have Reason, so it is the true and proper Use of it to employ it in Matters of Religion.

Every Man has an undoubted Right to judge for himself in his worldly Affairs ; and if so, much more ought they to have it in Affairs of greater Moment, in the Concernments of their Souls.

For Men to lay any Restraint upon others here is unjust.

Every Man is most concern'd for his Salvation, and must therefore be left to judge what he ought to believe and practise, in order to this End. For he that will chuse a Religion for me, ought to suffer for me, if I am in the Wrong.

But since every Man must bear his own Burden, so 'tis reasonable for Men to judge for themselves, in the Choice of their Religion.

As no Man ought, so no Man can be deprived of this Right. Such is the Nature of human Understanding, that it cannot be compelled to the Belief of any Thing by outward Violence ; another Man may persuade me by Reason to come over to his Opinion, but then I must be Judge whether

52 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

what he says is reasonable before I do so. But as to external Force, it can only make Men Hypocrites, and conceal, but not change their Opinions.

But farther.---The Exercise of private Judgment in Matters of Religion is our Duty; for as none but rational Creatures are capable of Religion, so there is no true Religion but in the Use of Reason. Therefore, if Men would be truly religious, they must make Use of their Reason in the Choice of the most acceptable Religion to God.

Where there is no Revelation, Reason is to guide us, which then is the only Rule to direct us.

From a Consideration of our own Existence we may infer the Existence of a first eternal Cause. From a Contemplation of the Creation, we may conclude this first cause powerful, wise, and good: From a Consideration of ourselves, who are capable of discerning between Good and Evil, and of chusing one, and refusing the other, we may collect our Obligations to moral Virtues, and judge the Practice of them agreeable to God. And thus, where there is no Revelation, every Man must, by the Use of his Reason, chuse a Religion for himself, and no Man can impose one upon another. And no such Impositions were ever attempted, but by the pretended Authority of a Revelation.

But supposing a Revelation; it does not destroy the Faculties with which we are endued; for tho' it acquaints us with such Things as we could not know by the Deductions of Reason, yet they must be such, as we are able to understand the Meaning of, when they are laid before us, and then assent to, as we are persuaded they come from God.

So that there will be always these two Things in Revelation which Reason must judge of. 1. The Truth; and, 2. The Meaning of the Revelation.

Secondly, Since the Virtue of our Religion consists in the inward Persuasion of Mind, 'tis necessary

necessary to exercise our private Judgment in examining the truth of that Religion we profess.

For if we owe our Religion to the places of our Nativities, or to our Humour or Interest, and the Practice of the Countries we live in, we bring all Religions upon a Level.

It follows, therefore, if we would be of any Religion to any good Purpose, we must examine it, and satisfy ourselves about it.

For tho' by the Happiness of Education we should profess the true Religion; yet, if we do not make it our own, by understanding the Reasons of it, it will not be profitable for us, we offer to God the *Sacrifice of Fools*, in which he has no Pleasure.

We see then 'tis absolutely necessary to use our Reason in the Choice of our Religion, and that without this, there is nothing which deserves the Name of it. This will further appear in the

Third Place, from the Manner wherein Christianity was first proposed to the World.

Our Saviour no where encouraged a rash Belief. He produced innumerable Miracles to prove himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God; to which I might add, that he appeal'd also to his Doctrine, and was as much admired for the Wisdom with which he spake, as for the Miracles which he worked.

Thus was Christianity at first proposed unto the World, and if God thought fit to give us such Arguments for the Truth of our Religion, 'tis our Duty to consider the Weight of them, that we may fully be persuaded in our own Minds, and have something to say for that Religion which God has done so much to establish.

St. Peter exhorts us, *to be ready always to give an answer to every Man, that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us.* And St. John bids us not believe every Spirit, but make Use of our Under-

standing, and all other Help, which God afforded us, *to try the Spirits whether they are of God.*

Fourthly, The Necessity of using our Reason in Matters of Religion, may be further inferr'd from the true Notion of Faith; which means an Assent of the Mind to such Propositions as we could not make out by Deductions from Reason, but which we assent to as they are reveal'd by God, and ground our Belief of them upon his Veracity. Even here Reason must judge of the Evidence and Certainty of this Revelation.

And this is a large Province of Reason, to judge of all the Proofs which are brought for a divine Revelation. If any Thing be pretended for a divine Revelation, which is contrary to Reason and the Principles of natural Religion, it must be rejected, because Reason and the Principles of natural Religion are prior to Revelation, and I can have no greater Proof that any Thing comes from God, than I have that that Proposition, which is plainly contradictory to Reason and the Principles of natural Religion, is false.

Thus far it must be left to Reason to judge of Revelation: It must both consider the *Proofs* for it, and the *Matter* it contains; and when we are satisfied that the *Matter* is worthy of God, and that there are sufficient Proofs of its being reveal'd, our Faith is so far from excluding Reason, that it is founded on the highest Reason.

Reason and Authority here, are not Things inconsistent; for where Authority is infallible, as in the present Case, there can be no greater Reason than to believe such Authority.

Faith is so far from superseding the Use of Reason that 'tis Reason itself grounded upon divine Testimony tho' we may have but a moral Certainty that it is so.

We believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God: But that the Scriptures are the Word of
God,

God, depends upon human Testimony ; which Testimony we must examine, as we do other Facts, till we come to be satisfied in our own private Judgments about it. So that 'tis not enough to say, we believe thus, but we must have some Reason for our Belief.

And then as to the Sense and Meaning of Scripture: If I must believe for myself, which is absolutely necessary for my own Salvation ; 'tis equally necessary that I should understand for myself too. For he that believes without having any Reason of his own for believing, may be in love with his own Fanices, or have other Peoples Persons in Admiration ; but neither seeks Truth as he ought, nor obeys his Maker, who would have him use his Reason to keep him from Error. And he that does not this, if he happens on the Truth, it is by Chance ; and I know not whether the Luckiness of the Accident will excuse the Irregularity of the Proceeding. This, at least, is certain, that he must be accountable for whatever Mistakes he makes ; whereas he that sincerely makes Use of the Faculties God has given him to discover Truth, may have this Satisfaction, that tho' he may miss Truth, he shall not miss the Reward of it, for he governs his Assent right, and believes, or disbelieves, according as Reason directs him ; and he that does otherwise misuses those Faculties, which were given him for no other End, but to search and follow the clearer Evidence and greater Probability.

And this, I hope, may suffice to shew that private Judgment in religious Matters is not only every Man's just Right, but also every Man's Duty.

But tho' this Liberty of private Judgment be under no Restraint from without, yet it ought to be under some Government within itself ; and there are due Cautions necessary to be observed in the Use of it.

What these are, I come in the *fourth* Place to show.

1. This private Judgment in religious Matters, is a Judgment of Discretion, which obliges only the Conscience of him who so judges.

Private Persons are only to judge for themselves, and not claim Authority over the Faith of others; for if I have a Right to impose my Opinions upon others, because I think them true, others have the same Right to impose theirs upon me; which destroys the Liberty of private Judgment.

So that every Man's private Judgment can claim no Authority but over himself. And tho' the Judgment of a learned Man would weigh more with me than the Judgment of a Mechanic, yet still, whenever a private Person judges for himself, his private Judgment must weigh most with him, because he uses his own Reason; and the Opinion of others cannot be of that Weight with him, because he either understands not, or is wholly ignorant of the Grounds of their Opinions.

Private Judgment still retains this Authority when it seems to lay it aside. For when a private Person pays a Deference to the Judgments of others, he does it because he looks upon them as wiser than himself.

Nay those who do oppose this Right of private Judgment, do actually make use of it, by giving Reasons why Men should not judge for themselves.

But whatever our private Judgment is, it must not think it has any Power to determine the Judgment of others. If our Reasons be satisfactory to them, they are obliged to be of our Judgment. But then this Obligation arises from the Nature of Truth, and not from any Authority which one Man's Judgment has over another.

If private Judgment be thus confined within itself, the Objections, as if it pleaded an Exemption from publick Judgments, will be groundless; for private Judgment claims no Authority over others. For in Cases where every Man is able to
judge

judge for himself, especially in Matters of Sin and Duty, every Man's private Judgment must be of supreme Authority to himself. In Cases of a difficult Nature the concurrent Judgment of learned Men must be of great Weight with all, but those who think no body so wise as themselves.

2. If private Judgment ought to be thus confin'd within itself: This Restraint is more reasonable in those Cases which affect the Peace and Happiness of the World.

And therefore if any Man, upon a Pretence of *freely* exercising his own private Judgment, should advance Notions destructive of Religion, Laws, and Government, such a Person is to be esteem'd and treated as an Enemy to Mankind.

Of this Sort are Atheists, who, by denying a God, dissolve that Trust which Men repose in one another, and upon which the Happiness of Life depends.

Such Principles as confound *moral Good* and *Evil*, and such as place *Right* in *Force*, are not to be justified as the Result of private Judgment, because they are contrary to the Happiness of the World.

Again; When Men attempt to mix *religious* and *civil Rights*, they abuse this Liberty of private Judgment, which ought to be confin'd to religious Matters.

There are several Prerogatives of this Kind, which Men have arrogated to themselves upon the Score of *Orthodoxy* of *Faith*. Such as Dominion founded in Grace; the Power of excommunicating and deposing civil Governors; the Lawfulness of breaking Contracts with Hereticks. Now if we consider that every Sect is *Orthodox* in its own Opinion, what Confusions would such Opinions raise in the World?

Men must therefore keep this private Judgment within its proper Province; and not under Pretence of Religion, endanger the civil Rights of Mankind.

For

For the same Reason no Man should oppose his private Judgment to what is publickly appointed, unless such Appointments are unlawful.

If it should be objected here, that this is a manifest Restraint upon this Liberty of judging, I answer, that if it be a Restraint, it is such a one, as an impartial Man will consent to.

There are many Truths which all, who use their Reason right, must agree in. Of this Nature I may reckon the Being and Providence of God, the Difference of moral Good and Evil, and the like; and therefore the Cases which I have mention'd under this Head, wherein Men ought not to exercise their own private Judgment to the Disturbance of the Publick, are such as, perhaps, may never happen. But if there be any Men of such an odd Turn of Head as not to agree with the rest of the World in these Things, such People must keep their Opinions to themselves. They cannot think themselves obliged to publish their Opinions, because the World would be the worse for them.

A Belief of Religion does plainly make for our present Happiness, and cannot prejudice our future Interest. If Religion is false, we gain by a Belief of it *here*, and we shall lose nothing *hereafter*. But if true, it will serve us here, and encrease our Happiness hereafter.

So that if any Persons cannot believe Religion to be true, such Persons ought, for the Benefit of Mankind, to keep their Discovery to themselves.

3. This Liberty of private Judgment does not make all Guides in Religion useless.

For as Men are not born Scholars, but must be taught many Things, so they must have some to teach them; and they who have not either Leisure or Capacities for these Studies, must depend upon the Abilities of others, if they desire to be satisfied in those Points, of which no Man is naturally a Judge.

That

That the Scriptures are the Word of God; that they were wrote by those Persons, whose Names they bear, depend upon such Proofs, as every private Man cannot be supposed to understand, and must therefore rely upon the Judgment of those who have made these Things their Study.

But there are good *general* Arguments of the Truth of Scripture, of which private Persons are Judges; such as arise from the general Consent of all Christian People concerning these Books; who still own the Scriptures to be the Word of God, tho' they pretend to prove different, and sometimes contrary Points out of them.

Again; The Scriptures were wrote in Languages with which the Generality of Men are unacquainted, therefore whether they are truly translated or no, they must depend upon those who are skill'd in the original Languages.

And yet, here again, there is a general Argument for the Truth of the Translations, that the different Sects own their several Translations to be right in the main; and where they differ most in their Translations, there is generally the least Importance in the Things; and therefore no Necessity for every private Person to understand them.

Again; As to the Meaning of Scripture, tho' the necessary Things are always plain to the meanest Understandings, yet there are Things in them difficult to be understood; and therefore in these Cases we must apply to those, whose Business it is to explain these difficult Places.

If it's said, that these Places are not necessary to be understood, and therefore no Necessity for Teachers to explain them. I answer; that 'tis every Man's Duty to acquaint himself, as perfectly as he can, with the Will of God; and since Things, not simply necessary, may serve to enforce those that are, no Man can fairly reject any Means of Instruction,

Instruction, which are in his Power, without being guilty of the Crime of being wilfully ignorant.

In these Cases Teachers are necessary ; and therefore a standing Order of them is necessary for the Support of Religion in the World. And Men may, without departing from their Right of private Judgment, nay, and ought, to make all the Use they can of the superior Knowledge of their Guides. I might further add, that in the plainest Cases, where Men may be supposed to judge for themselves, all Manner of Instruction is not useless. Some Men are careless, and are apt to overlook the plainest Matters, till they are put in a right Way of thinking.

4. Another Caution to be used in the Exercise of private Judgment, is to employ it upon such Subjects as we are capable of being Masters of.

Tho' there be many Things wherein every private Person is incapable of judging ; yet, in the great Points of Religion, he can, and ought to judge for himself. Because these Things being the Rule, by which Men of all Capacities must finally be judged, are clearly made known to the Capacities of all Men.

Every private Person is not capable of laying at once before his Mind all the Proofs of all the Religions in the World, and examining them in order to choose the *true* one for himself. But every private Man may judge in general of the Truth of any Religion.

Thus, for Instance, every Man of common Sense may judge that that Religion could not come from God, which teaches unworthy Notions of him, and enjoins such Things as Reason forbids, and has nothing but Miracles not well attested, to vouch for it.

On the contrary, a Religion that teaches worthy Notions of God ; that enjoins Piety and Vir-
tue ;

true; that made its Way in the World by its own Excellency; that had publick and great Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of it, must be own'd to be from God.

Such general Proofs of the Truth of any Religion Men in general may understand, and by these Rules discern the true from the false, and determine their Choice. If they find that this Character belongs to no other but the Christian Religion, which will appear, this must incline them to Christianity.

And then as to the necessary Articles and Doctrines of Christianity, they are so plainly laid down in the *New Testament*, that I cannot but believe them to be the Doctrines of Scripture, whoever should affirm the contrary. If any one should tell me that Murder and Lying are lawful I cannot believe him, because Reason tells me they are Sins, and Christ has plainly forbid them. In such evident Cases every Man ought to judge for himself.

I confess, indeed, if we consider Christianity under the different Systems into which different Sects have moulded it, few People will be allowed to be Judges of it. But if we consult the *New Testament*, and consider the Doctrines which our Saviour has made necessary to be believed by all, we shall find them fewer and plainer than those which the different Sects of Christians have establish'd.

And therefore private Persons are not to be debarr'd the Liberty of judging for themselves, because they cannot understand every Thing which has been maintain'd under the Name of Religion.

5. Tho' every private Person is thus to judge for himself in Matters of Religion, yet every private Person is not to set up for a Disputant.

This is a Province which belongs to the Pastors of the Church. 'Tis true, every Man is obliged, as far as he is able, to forward the Salvation of his Neighbour.

Neighbour. But Disputation, as 'tis commonly managed, is an Art which cannot be acquir'd without much Study, and he that is not well versed in it, if he be not careful, will be baffled in the plainest Truths.

Unlearned Men may have clear Perceptions of the Truths they believe, and yet not be able to explain them clearly; much less to answer all the sophistical Arguments which may be urged against them.

And if this should happen, we must call in the Assistance of others, who are better skill'd in the Art of disputing, and rely upon their Judgment.

Thus I have shewn that this private Judgment, tho' it be free in itself, ought to be under some Regulation, and have laid down some Cautions necessary to be observed in the Use of it.

And if Men would use these Cautions, this would obviate most of those Objections which are made against it; and shew the Weakness of those Reasons which are urged to deprive Men of it. The most material of which I shall now, in the

Fifth Place, consider, in order to the further establishing this Right and Liberty of private Judgment.

1. Then, 'tis objected, that if every one follows his own private Judgment, this will multiply different Religions, and give Rise to many Heresies.

They who are for thus divesting Men of this Liberty, for fear Men should fall away from true Religion, have a very mean Opinion of it. False Religions may suffer by being examin'd; but the true loves Light, and invites Men to look into it; and the oftner we examine it, we are the more confirm'd in the Belief of it.

Other Religions force Men to be Followers of it by Violence; but 'tis for the Honour of Christianity, that where Men have the greatest Liberty to examine into the Reason of it, there should be
such

such Multitudes who agree in the main Articles of it.

But supposing that some Men do, by indulging their private Judgment, too much fall into damnable Errors; is this a Reason why Men should be deprived of this, and believe nothing but what their Teachers impose upon them? No, by no Means, because Men cannot believe any thing, but upon what they think sufficient Evidence; and cannot be of any Opinion meerly because others are so.

Further; if it were possible to deprive Men of this Right, it would be unjust, because it belongs to them.

But to this 'tis replied, that the Inconveniencies arising from the Exercise of private Judgment, are sufficient to justify Men's being deprived of it. But tho' the Inconveniencies are ever so great, yet if God has invested Men with this Liberty, no accidental Inconveniencies will warrant us to give it up.

Do not Sin and Misery, and almost all the Mischiefs of the World, arise from our being free Agents?

But to avoid these Inconveniencies, would any one say, it is better to be without Freedom? This, indeed, would remedy all these Evils; but it would destroy all Virtue; and as bad would be the Consequence of depriving Men of the free Use of their Reason.

So that we may as well deprive Men of the Freedom of their Actions, which would destroy all Virtue, as divest them of the Liberty of their Judgment, which would undermine all Religion.

Since, therefore, God has not thought fit to provide an infallible Remedy against Vice, why should we think he has against Errors? Men may prevent both if they please; and if they do not, 'tis their own Fault.

In both these Cases God has left Men to their Liberty; he has not commanded us, nor put it in
our

our Power, to give up our Reason to others; or if he had, this Method would not prevent Diversity of Opinions. Every Man will differ from another; unless God should work a perpetual Miracle in preserving any Men, or Succession of Men, from Errors, in order to be infallible Guides to others. This is what there is no Occasion for, because Men, by the Use of their Reason, and the Helps God has given them, may come to the Knowledge of all necessary Points of Religion, without an infallible Guide.

The Mischiefs which are so much complain'd of, as arising from this Liberty of private Judgment, would not be remedy'd if this Liberty could be restrain'd; and therefore are no Objection against it. For where this Liberty is denied, and a pretended Infallibility set up, there are as many different Opinions, as where this Liberty is exercised. And 'tis no wonder that a pretended Infallibility itself cannot do that, which the real Infallibility of the Apostles could not do. We know there were Disputes in their Time, and even among themselves; and there will be Errors and Controversies to the End of the World. And, therefore, since no Man can secure his Brother from Error, 'tis fit Men should judge for themselves; for then if they be in an Error, they may recover themselves out of it by thinking better of the Matter; but if this is deny'd them, whatever Errors they shall fall into, they must live and die in them.

2. It will, perhaps, be objected, that if every Man be left to judge for himself in religious Matters, it will follow, that there may be Fundamentals reveal'd by God, which many People are not obliged to believe.

I have often observed, that the necessary Points of Religion are so plainly laid down in Scripture, that an honest and industrious Man cannot fail of understanding-

understanding them; and, consequently, whatsoever is not so plainly laid down, but that wise and good Men have differ'd about it, is not necessary for them to know.

The only general Duty, in this Case, is not to be negligently, wilfully, or maliciously ignorant of any Part of God's Word. But it does not from hence follow, that every Man is obliged to study every Particular contain'd in Scripture; because some Things in Scripture a Man may be safely ignorant of.

Since, therefore, necessary Things are always plain, there is no Danger that Men should believe less than God has required of them. But if they are determin'd by the Judgment of others, they will be in Danger of believing more than God has requir'd, and more than is true.

And yet after all, Men cannot be properly said to believe more than what they are able to understand; and therefore if Men cannot, by diligent Attention and Instruction, arrive at the Knowledge of what is necessary to be believed, their giving themselves up to the Dictates of others will be no Service to them: They may confess with their Mouths, but they cannot believe with their Hearts, unless they are competent Judges of what they are told is the true Faith.

3. It is further objected, that if every Man is to judge for himself in religious Matters, and every Man's Religion be true to himself; this brings all Religions upon a Level.

But this Objection is of no Force, because it supposes the Truth of any Religion to depend upon our Belief of it; whereas, the Truth of Religion depends upon its Proofs; which are the same whether we consider them or not. If, indeed, the Proofs of all Religions were equal, this would put all Religions upon a Level; but as long as Christianity has stronger Proofs than any other Religion, Chri-

66 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

Christianity cannot be upon a Level with other Religions by our believing those as much as we do Christianity.

So that tho' every Man's Religion be true to himself, yet it does not follow that it is true in itself. He may have made a wrong Choice, which is a good Reason why he should examine it, but no Reason why he should not be left to judge for himself of its Truth and Falshood; because there are good general Arguments of the Truth or Falshood of any Religion, whereby private Persons may be convinced that all Religions are not equal, since it will appear there is an evident Difference between them.

But this Objection of bringing all Religions upon a Level, may be more justly charged upon those who will not permit Men to choose their Religion for themselves. Because if we are to be of the Religion of our Country, because it is there established, 'tis plain all Religions are alike; and the Reason why we are of one Religion rather than another, is not any other Thing than what might as well have determin'd us to be of any other Religion as well as that which we are of.

Whereas he that chooses a Religion for himself, according to the best of his Judgment, makes his Religion his own; and tho' this will not make it true, yet the Man, who is thus deceived, may hope, thro' God's Mercy, to be recover'd out of his Error, or be saved in it.

4. If every Man is to judge for himself, it may be objected, this will confound the Distinction of *Virtue* and *Vice*.

But this Objection supposes the Truth of Things to depend upon our Opinions of them; whereas the Nature of Things is immutable, and one of those Rules by which we are to direct our Judgment, and then no ill Consequences will follow the freest Use of it. In lesser Matters Men may judge
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that to be Good which is Evil. But in greater, the Difference between Virtue and Vice is so plain, that Men cannot be mistaken.

Again; tho' Men in lesser Matters may judge that acceptable to God, which is no Part of Religion; yet they cannot introduce the Practice of any real Impiety under the Pretence of judging it acceptable to God, because they have the Reason of Things, and the reveal'd Will of God, as a plain Rule to go by, which will secure them from mistaking Impiety for Religion.

But if it be left to publick Authority to determine what is, or is not acceptable to God; tho' the real Difference between Things cannot be destroy'd, yet the Weight of such Authority, join'd to the Prohibition of private Judgment, does, in Fact, make Men mistake Vice for Virtue, and think that true Religion consists in the most absurd Actions, and consistent with the most flagrant Impieties; and that they please God by being inhuman to Men.

5. It may be further objected, that this private Judgment will make Men proud and conceited, and neglect the necessary Means of Instruction, upon a Presumption that they are wise enough of themselves.

This is a manifest Abuse of this Liberty of private Judgment; and Men may be as proud of other Things as well as their Judgment.

And 'tis altogether as lawful to plunder every rich Man, for fear he should be proud, as to debar private Persons the Exercise of their own Reason, to keep them obedient to their Superiors.

But if Men, in judging for themselves, would observe those Cautions which have been laid down, all these Inconveniences would be avoided; and yet, if it appears that private Persons have a Right to judge for themselves in religious Matters, it signifies nothing whether the Mischiefs, or the Benefits,

68 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

fits, arising from this Liberty of private Judgment, preponderate. For 'tis a Question of Right, and not of Conveniency.

However, since I have consider'd the Mischiefs which arise from private Judgment, it will not be improper to take a View of the Benefits of it.

Next to our Lufts there is no greater Hindrance to the Belief of the Truths of Religion, than the Want of weighing the Proofs upon which they are established. Our Knowledge is not born with us, but is acquired, and is more or less improved according as we imploy our Talents.

Hence we may, in great Measure, account for that surprizing Difference which we find among Men as to their intellectual Abilities. Whilst some Men, by a right Use of their Faculties, have acquir'd a clear Knowledge of the most difficult Things; others, thro' their Laziness, know little or nothing at all.

There is no Truth more clear than the Existence of a God; and yet he that sits down with Things as he finds them, without ever reflecting upon their Causes and Ends, or enquiring into himself may live long without any such Notion of a God, as will influence his Practice.

This is evident in the meaner People, who are always at Labour, who have such gross Notions of God, as are next to no Knowledge of him at all. The Lives of many others, who, tho' in better Circumstances, have yet made as little Use of their Reason, give us Cause to fear, that they have no clear Impressions of a Deity.

Now this can be ascribed to nothing but want of considering these Matters. 'Tis observable that Atheism and Irreligion prevail most where Men have made the least Use of their Reason, as it is plain in those Countries where Men are prohibited the Use of their Reason; and that Religion prevails everywhere in Proportion to the Improvement of Men's private Reason and Judgment.

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For tho' a superficial Enquiry is not sufficient to establish Men in the Belief of the Truths of Religion; yet if they go to the Bottom of Things they will be satisfied.

'Tis impossible for any Man, who judges impartially for himself, to be of the Side of Atheism. Their most celebrated Books consist of low Wit, instead of Argument; and when they pretend to Reason, they betray the Weakness of their Cause.

The Difficulties rais'd against Religion have nothing in them, when they come to be examin'd: The Objections are such as are in common to Religion with other Things; so that either there is no such Thing as Truth, or Religion has as good a Pretence to it as any Thing else.

This will appear to any one who will but make the same Use of his Reason in Religion as he does in other Matters, and go over in his Mind the several Proofs of it, and examine them himself: But if Men will not do this, if they will take Things upon Trust from others, and greedily hearken to their Objections, without ever examining whether they be well grounded, they may set up for Infidelity, for want of Consideration.

But if Men would carefully examine these Points, if Men would seriously examine into the Atheist's Hypothesis, they could never swallow the Difficulty which it is clog'd with.

A brief View of the common Principles of Atheism will suffice to show the Absurdities of it.

That the World was from Eternity; or that it was made by Chance: That Matter is endued with a Power of Thought and self Motion; that we are nothing but meer Mechanism; that there is no moral Difference between Good and Evil; that there is no future State: These are the Principles of Atheism.

But cannot any Man, who will examine Things himself, discover the contrary Scheme to be better Grounds?

There are such visible Marks of Wisdom and Power, in the Works of the Creation, that we cannot but discover the Author. And he must be a very careless Spectator of human Affairs, who does not observe, that the World is govern'd by the same Power and Wisdom that made it. If he turns his Eye inwardly upon himself, and observes the Springs of his own Actions, he can never believe himself a Piece of Clockwork; but must be convinc'd that he is a free Agent, and, consequently, he is an accountable Creature.

'Tis needless to go thro' all these Principles. The more Men think for themselves, the more they will be persuad'd of the Truth of the Principles of natural Religion.

Revealed Religion will also gain the more Belief the more we examine it.

For tho' this was more than we could justly expect, after God had made sufficient Provision for knowing and obeying his Will in the Principles of our Creation, by that Reason he had given us; yet, since human Nature was so much degenerated, it must be owned highly agreeable to the divine Goodness not to leave us in this State of Darkness, but to vouchsafe such frail Creatures some supernatural Light, some farther Assistance to obey and know his Will. That such a Revelation as this, is possible, none can deny. And that God made such a Revelation, has been already proved.

If we consider the Christian Revelation, it will appear, in every Branch of it, highly reasonable; and becoming the Wisdom and Goodness of God: Nothing being more proper to promote Piety. The Proofs of this Revelation must satisfy every inquisitive Man; Christ's Miracles were undeniable. His Disciples were unfit to propagate his Religion, had it been an Imposture. Their Behaviour declared they believ'd the Truth of it; and they could

could not have prevail'd with others to have received it, had they not worked Miracles.

These Reflections are sufficient, if Men would but examine Things for themselves, to make them believe the Principles both of natural and reveal'd Religion; nay, they could not but be Christians if they calmly considered Christianity.

If there are any who do not believe these Things, 'tis for Want of examining into them; or from an Affectation of Novelty; or; from their Lusts.

2. Constancy and Stedfastness, in the Profession of the true Religion, is another Advantage of the Exercise of this private Judgment, in examining into the Grounds of our Faith.

He that takes up his Religion with little Reason, will part with it easily. If I am of any Religion, because 'tis my Interest, I shall change it when it shall be my Interest to do so.

In these and all others Cases, where Men's Religion is not their own Choice, they will be inconstant in the Profession of it. And therefore if we would hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, we must search into the Grounds of it. And he that is a Christian, upon a full Conviction of the Truth of Christianity, his Belief will be Proof against all Temptations and Dangers.

But the Man, whose Religion is not rooted in his Understanding, will readily part with it when it is likely to bring him any trouble.

And, therefore, if it be our Duty to be constant in the Profession of Christianity, and if we are obliged to suffer even Death itself, rather than renounce it, 'tis necessary to be persuaded of the Truth of it. For if we do not see sufficient Reason to believe it, we shall never suffer for the Sake of it. And if any Man should be so far influenc'd by the Example of others, as to suffer because they do, he suffers like a Fool, and not

as a Christian, because *God is not glorified on this Behalf.*

If, therefore, Men ought to be stedfast in the Profession of the true Faith, if they ought to endure Grief, and expect any Reward for such Sufferings, 'tis necessary that they should judge for themselves of the Truth of their Religion, because such Constancy can proceed only from Men's own private Persuasion, and may be reckon'd an Advantage of the Exercise of this private Judgment.

3. Another great Advantage arising from the free Exercise of private Judgment, in Matters of Religion, is, that it lays a Foundation for the Practice of mutual Charity.

For since every Man's Opinion is supposed to be the Result of his own private Reason, and every Man has a Right to the free Exercise of his own Reason, it is unreasonable to expect that other Men should obsequiously quit their own Opinions, and embrace ours. Now if he whom I would bring over to my Opinions, cannot find sufficient Grounds to believe them, or is so well satisfied of his own, that he will not be at the Pains of a new Examination, we have no Reason to be angry with him, for this is but what we ourselves do in the same Cases. And, if we be angry, have not they the same Reason to be angry with us? for all Mens Opinions are true to themselves; and if every Man should quarrel with another upon this Account, the World would be in continual Confusion.

Since then every Man has an undoubted Right to judge for himself: and since there is a good Agreement between all honest Men in the great Points of Religion, we should bear with one another in lesser Matters.

We are apt, indeed, to think, that it is Obstinacy in others not to embrace our Opinions: but have not others the same Reason to think,
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that they have form'd their Judgment upon such sufficient Grounds, that 'tis Obstinacy in us not to be of their Minds?

Every Man, therefore, should be left to that Liberty of Judgment wherewith God has made him free.

Further, if we consider what Clouds and Darknests rest upon our Understandings, we shall soon be convinc'd, that the strongest Understanding is not so exempt from that Condition of Men, as not to feel its Weakness, and own itself liable to Errors; and this will make us not forward in obtruding our Opinions upon others.

How few are there, who have fairly examin'd their own Opinions? How often are they taken upon Trust? And how many think themselves in the right for no other Reason, but because they think so? And how unfit are such as these to prescribe to others?

Even they who have carefully examin'd their own Opinions, cannot, in every Case, be secure, that they have had all the Particulars before them, which concern the Question in Hand. And, if this be the Case, we should be as willing to learn of others as to dictate to them. Since all Men are allow'd the free Use of their own Reason in the Search of Truth, the same Question may be consider'd by different Persons in different Views, and what one has overlook'd, another may have observ'd; which is a good Reason why we should debate the Matter with Candour, and not magisterially dictate, or tamely submit to another.

To this I might add, that tho' there are many Truths which all Men will agree in, there are others about which Men differ as much as in their Taste; which tho' it agrees in great Matters, yet where there is any Niceness or Difficulty, it represents the same Thing differently to different Persons. Some Mens Understandings are of a peculiar
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Cast from others. And if we consider the Quickness of some Mens Parts, their different Education, the various Principles they have imbib'd, the different Methods of Reasoning they have been us'd to, and the Prejudices they labour under, we shall find that that which some take to be Demonstration, will scarce be thought probable to others.

I don't now speak of fundamental Points, in which all agree, but of Things that are doubtful. In such Cases Reason will proceed differently; and, therefore, we ought to bear with each other.

If we have Recourse to the Scriptures for the Solution of our Doubts in Matters not necessary, there are so many Things hard to be understood, that we shall be inclin'd to think, that God hereby design'd to make a Trial of our Industry, and teach us Humility, and to furnish us with Occasions of mutual Charity, and keep us from imposing upon others in Matters so difficult.

And these Reflections will make us heartily join in the Practice and Defence of all the necessary Points of Christianity. And then we shall disarm its Enemies of the most formidable Weapons with which they fight against it.

I have already consider'd some of the chief Objections which are rais'd against Mens using their private Judgment in religious Matters.

But it may be further objected, that if every Man is to judge for himself, this seems to destroy the Authority of the earliest Writers of Christianity, who as they lived nearest our Saviour's Time, so they may be presum'd to know the true Faith better than we; and, therefore, their Credit ought to be preferr'd to our Judgment.

This naturally leads me to treat of an important Question, *viz.* How far we ought to be determin'd in our Belief merely by human Authority.

For the clearer Solution of which, I observe, that if there be any Thing in Religion, which
they

they only are Judges of, who lived at or near those Times of Christ, in such Things we must rely upon their Testimony, for the Information of our Judgment. Of this Nature are the historical Facts upon which the Truth of the Christian Revelation depends. But the present Question is not about such Things as the Life and Actions of our Saviour, but about Articles of Faith and Rules of Life. Now these are Questions of Reason; and here I must not only enquire whether any Doctrine was receiv'd by the primitive Church, but whether it is grounded on Scripture. And, if it is not there, I am under no Obligation to receive it, because it was antiently receiv'd.

Nor am I obliged to take any Interpretation of any particular Passage to be true, because it is antient, unless it is agreeable to the Scope of the Place, and Phraseology of Scripture.

But here it will be said, that the first Writers may be presumed to understand what was true Christianity, and what the Sense of the *New Testament*, better than we; and, therefore, what they have deliver'd ought to be preferr'd to our own Judgment.

In answer to this, several Things are to be consider'd.

1. That they, as Men, were liable to Errors, and therefore, we cannot rely upon their Opinions any farther than they are agreeable to Reason. They might mistake the Apostles Meaning, as they did our Saviour's; and if it be pretended, that what they wrote was either what they received from the Apostles, or agreeable to what they receiv'd, 'tis more than probable that they did.

2. The Number of the first Writers are but few, in Comparison; and but a small Part is remaining of what they wrote, so that they are but of small Advantage to us, as to free us from the Trouble of examining Things ourselves, supposing that
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upon other Accounts that was not our Duty, because there are but few Points they have determin'd for us. To which Purpose I observe,

3. That the Writings of those Times do not treat of many of those Subjects which are now in Debate; so that in these Cases we cannot appeal to them.

4. Many of the first Writers were unacquainted with the *Jewish* Learning, which was necessary towards understanding several Doctrines of Christianity, and several Passages of the *New Testament*, which had a Reference to the *Mosaic Dispensation*.

5. No Man can understand their Language and Phrases of the Antients, without great Study. So that the Scriptures are, generally speaking, as easy to be understood, if not easier, than they; which appears from hence, that there has been as much Dispute about the Meaning of these Writers, as about the Sense of Scripture.

6. These Writers have err'd in material Points; There is scarce any one of these Authors who has not contradicted another, and very often himself; so that it would be difficult to determine any Point with Certainty, by their Authority, if their Authority was sufficient to do it. 'Tis not easy to gather from them what was the general Belief of the Church in those Ages, or what was their own. And yet, if this could be never so clearly collected, I observe,

7. That in difficult Points, the Number of Authorities ought not to determine us to follow any Opinion, but the Truth of it. Because in Matters of real Difficulty and Obscurity 'tis more probable, that but a few have found out the Truth, than that a many have done so: For if we take the whole Bulk of Mankind, 'tis certain, that the inquisitive Part of it are by far the least; and if again we take and divide them, 'tis equally certain, that they who have thought justly, are by far the
smallest

smallest Number; so that in all intricate Questions, 'tis most likely, that that wherein but a few agree should be the true Opinion.

8. Hence it follows, that the Opinions of others ought to be of no Weight with us any farther than they are supported by sufficient Reason; and, therefore, we ought to examine Things before we receive them as true. To encourage us to this, I observe,

9. That tho' we had never so many Writings of the Antients, and these Writings had determin'd never so many Points now in Controversy among us; yet we have still Room left for the Exercise of our Reason, we have the Advantage of coming after them, and may therefore discover those Things, which they were unacquainted with.

'Tis true, indeed, that Christianity in this Respect differs from human Sciences; they are, by Degrees, brought to Perfection; whereas Christianity was most perfect at the Beginning; but, by Degrees, became so degenerate and so blinded with human Doctrines, that it was difficult to reform it to the primitive Standard.

So that since Christianity has suffer'd such Corruptions, and those human Writings which are supposed to contain the best Accounts of Christianity, have had their Share in the common Calamity, there is Room for Study to find out the true Doctrines of Christianity.

Even the Scriptures themselves, tho' they have suffer'd less from the Injuries of Time than any other Book, will, however, be better understood, the more they are studied. Tho' the Antients have done much in this Kind, yet they have left enough to do for those that come after; and several Passages in Scripture, which but few of them understood, are now set in a clear Light; and many that are now obscure, may, in Time, be

be clear'd up, if we use the same Diligence as those that went before us.

From whence it fully appears, that we ought to use our private Judgment in religious Matters, and not servilely submit to any human Authority whatsoever. *

I know we are apt to have a great Regard for those who were esteem'd in distant Ages; and, to conclude, that they could never have embraced such an Opinion, if it had not been true. But this is a weak Way of concluding. Their living long ago, and their being esteem'd, are distinct Considerations. If they had been justly esteem'd, and held any particular Opinions, I should be inclined to examine what Reasons they gave for their Opinions; but this I should do upon Account of the Reputation they had, and not because they lived many Ages ago; and just so much Evidence as there is of the Truth of their Tenets, just so much Assent we should yield to them, and they themselves advis'd those who lived with them, to examine what they deliver'd, and to receive or reject it according as they found it consonant or repugnant to Truth. They were open and ingenuous in acknowledging their own Failings; they confess'd themselves liable to Mistakes; and, therefore, we are utterly inexcusable if, after this, we believe all they say without Examination.

Thus much concerning how far we ought to be determin'd in our Belief by human Authority.

I come now to answer some Objections out of Scripture against *Free-thinking*.

It is objected, that tho' Reason was in its primitive State a proper Judge in religious Matters, it cannot be admitted for such in its present Degeneracy.

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* Vide *Lactant. de origine Erroris, Lib. II. Sect. vii. pag. 104. Edit. Thysii, Lugd. Batav. 1652, 8vo.*

If by this Degeneracy be meant any Defect arising from Men's Passions, 'tis nothing to the Purpose. Because I have already laid it down as a necessary Qualification to enable Men to form a right Judgment, that they should divest themselves of all such Impediments as these; and, therefore, tho' they whose Reason is thus corrupted, are incompetent Judges of religious Matters, or, indeed, of any Matter; yet they, who have kept their Reason clear, may be allow'd to judge for themselves.

But if by this Corruption of our Reason be meant something which is ascribed to *Adam's* Fall, it remains to be proved, that human Reason has thus suffer'd, before it ought to be displaced from *judging of religious Matters*.

For tho' Man is now imperfect, 'tis impossible to be proved, that his Faculties, either of Soul or Body, are unable to perform the Offices they were design'd for. The Feet can still walk, and the Understanding can discern between Good and Evil, and the Will can refuse the one, and chuse the other.

The Scriptures also suppose Men capable of reasoning, otherwise all the Exhortations to use our own Reason and Judgment, and all the Reproofs for neglecting to do so, would be insignificant.

But let us see what Ground there is for this Opinion of the Depravity of human Reason.

If human Nature and all its Faculty were corrupted by the Sin of our first Parents; this Corruption was either the *natural* Effect of it, or else it was only a *judicial* Effect of it.

If this Corruption was the *natural* Effect of this Sin; we who are the degenerate Offspring of *Adam*, after such a long Train of Transgressions, should have contracted such an universal Corruption, as would have ruin'd our Natures, and destroy'd all our Faculties.

Sinful Habits may, indeed, corrupt our Nature; but the first Sin of *Adam* could not produce a sinful
Habit

80 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

Habit in *him*, much less in his *Posterity*. Indeed it is hard to conceive how it could affect *them* at all. And, therefore, there is no Occasion to fetch this Corruption as far as from *Adam's* Sin, when we may sooner find it in the voluntary Wickedness of his *Posterity*.

Tho' *Concupiscence* be derived from Parents to their Children, yet there is no Occasion to seek for *this*, as far as in *Adam*; succeeding intermediate Parents might transmit this, whether they had it from *Adam* or no. And if they had it from *him*, it cannot be ascribed to *original* Corruption, because it was the Occasion of it. And if they had not transgressed, there had been nothing criminal in their *Concupiscence*.

Nor were they, by that Transgression, deprived of any of their natural Perfections with which they were created; they were, indeed, deprived of those gracious Privileges which they then enjoy'd; but this cannot be called a Corruption of human Nature, but only divesting it of some Things which did not naturally belong to it.

If there be any *moral* Corruption of our Nature, 'tis not *equal* in all Men, and therefore it does not, by any *physical* Efficacy, derive itself from *Adam*, as our Shape is derived from our Parents.

If it be said that this Corruption was *judicial*, this does not appear from the Sentence pronounced against *Adam*, or any Punishment inflicted upon him, neither of which extended to his *intellectual* Capacities, but concern'd only his Body, and his temporal Happiness, by inflicting Labour, and Pains, and Death, upon him.

This sad State descended to his *Posterity*; but then, tho' they were Sufferers by *Adam's* Sin, they suffer'd nothing but what they were naturally liable to, and could not escape but by an Act of extraordinary Favour; which as they had no Claim to, so they had no Injustice done them in their being de-

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barr'd from it. They did not suffer any thing, by way of positive Punishment, for *Adam's* Sin, as is supposed in the present Case. This would have been inconsistent with the Goodness of God, thus to have punish'd the Innocent with the Guilty.

It does not appear, therefore, that *Adam* impair'd any of his intellectual Abilities by his Fall.

And as *Adam* contracted no intellectual Weakness by his Fall, so he could not transmit any such to his Posterity. Nor would it be consistent with the Wisdom of God, any more than with his Goodness and Justice, for one single Transgression in *Adam* to condemn the whole Race of Mankind, whom he made to obey him, to an utter Incapacity of attaining this End.

There seems to be no Ground for any such Opinion in Scripture, which will appear by taking a View of the chief Passages which are usually alledged in Favour of it.

The Corruption mention'd, *Gen.* vi. 5, 12. and viii. 21. is not any *original* and *unavoidable* Corruption, the Effect of *Adam's* Sin, but the voluntary Wickedness of his Posterity; otherwise God cannot be supposed to punish it so severely. For the Corruption here spoken of is that, for which God *repented he had made Man*, and which provok'd him to destroy them; and, therefore, he himself could not be the Occasion of it, by inflicting it as a Punishment upon all Men for the Sin of the first.

'Tis farther observable, that it is said, *That the Imagination of Man's Heart is evil from his Youth.* For if this was the Meaning of the Place, the same Reason, which at first moved God to punish Mankind, would be assign'd, even while it continued in Force, for his not punishing them any more; which would be an unaccountable Piece of Oeconomy. But if we read the Words, not as making two, but one Sentence only, and remember that the *Hebrew* Particle, which we translate *for*, often signifies

82 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

altho', and then that *the Imagination of Man's Heart is evil from his Youth*, will not be assign'd as a Reason of God's forbearing to punish Man any more, but as an Aggravation, magnifying his Mercy in this Forbearance. *Q. d.* Altho' Man should continue to be thus wicked, yet I will not any more destroy the World upon this Account. If we take the Words in this Sense, they are so far from being any Proof of this Corruption, that they seem to suppose it possible for Men not to be thus wicked.

The next Passage is that of the *Psalmist*, Psalm li. 5. *Behold I was shapen in Wickedness, and in Sin hath my Mother conceived me.* But the *Psalmist* speaks of not an original Corruption, but only of himself. And the Words are an hyperbolical Expression, to denote his very early Inclinations to Wickedness.

In like Manner we are to understand that of *Isaiab*, chap. xlviii. 8. *I knew that thou would'st deal very treacherously, and wast call'd a Transgressor from the Womb*; and that of the Pharisees to the blind Man restor'd to his Sight, *John ix. 34. Thou wast altogether born in Sins.*

None of which Places can have any Reference to *Adam's Sin*, because they speak plainly of different and many Acts of Sin: Whereas *Adam's Sin* was one, and terminated in himself, and is distinguish'd from the personal Transgressions of others.

Besides, how could this Corruption be made an Objection against wicked Men, since it was not in their Power to avoid it; and the Righteous themselves were subject to it as well as they?

Farther yet, if by being *Sinners from the Womb*, must be meant something *original*; by the same Way of arguing we shall make several Virtues *original*. Since the same Expressions are used of *Mercy* and *Compassion*, and *Trust* in God; which is contrary to the Notion of *original Corruption*. *Vide Job*, chap. xxxi. 18. *Psalme xxii. 9, 10.*

Another

Private Judgment, or Free-thinking. 83

Another Passage, which is urg'd to prove this universal Corruption, is, *Rom. v. 12.* where this Assertion is supposed to be contain'd, viz. *that in Adam all have sinned.* But the Apostle asserts nothing like it. The Words $\epsilon\phi' \omega$, upon which this Opinion is here grounded, may be more truly render'd, as it is in our Translation, *for that, all Men have sinned*, without any Reference to *Adam*.

This Interpretation makes the Apostle's Discourse very clear; whereas if $\epsilon\phi' \omega$ be referr'd to *Adam*, it affords a very forc'd Construction.

Besides, in the next Verse but one, it is said, that *Death reign'd from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the Similitude of Transgression, i. e.* who had not sinned so capitally as he had; which as it implies that all Men had actually sinned, so it confirms the foregoing Interpretation, and shews that these Words need not relate to *Adam's Sin*, but to the actual Sins of every Man.

And since all Men were Sinners, this justifies that universal Death which passed upon all Men, and which all Men, as they were Sinners, deserved; tho' all Men, 'tis probable, would not have suffer'd, if *Adam's Sin* had not introduced it into the World.

By this we may understand those Words, ver. 19. *That by one Man's Disobedience many were made Sinners*, which do not mean that we sinn'd in *Adam*, but that we fell into an evil State, upon Occasion of *Adam's Sin*.

He brought Death and Misery into the World, which tho' they might befall us as Men, and justly as Sinners; yet it is upon Account of *Adam's Sin*, that our Sins are so far imputed to us as to bring these Things upon us; tho', at the same Time, we contract no Guilt, nor suffer any Punishment from *Adam's Sin*, but only from our own.

84 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

Again; *Rom. vii. 23.* the Apostle says, *I see another Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity, to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members.*

Now besides other Interpretations, which may fairly be put upon this Chapter, 'tis evident, since the Apostle no where says that this *Law in his Members* came by Nature, or was derived from *Adam*, there is nothing in all this which concerns the present Question. Men may bring such a Law, as the Apostle here speaks of, by vicious Habits; and this Chapter contains a very lively Description of the great Power of evil Customs.

But if we suppose that the Apostle places the Prevalency of this *carnal Law in his Members*, in his being under the Law of *Moses*, which discover'd the Sinfulness of several Actions, without affording Helps to overcome them; I say, whatever Interpretations we put upon this Chapter, there is nothing in it which favours the Opinion of original Corruption.

There is another Passage, *Ephes. ii. 3.* alledged in Favour of this original Corruption, viz. *That we were, by Nature, the Children of Wrath, even as others.* But these Words refer to an acquir'd Corruption from our own Sins; and in this Sense the Word *Nature* is often used.

But if the Apostle, by *Nature*, meant what is usually meant by that Word in a strict Sense; this was not the *Ephesians* Fault, but the Fault of him who made them such.

Or, by *Nature*, may be meant, that they were really obnoxious to the divine Displeasure upon Account of their Sins. Thus the Word is used, *Gal. iv. 8.*

But in whatever Sense we take the Words, we cannot think we are fit for nothing but Hell the Moment we are born. The Scripture gives a better Account of Children; and our Saviour tells us,
that

that *unless we become little Children, we shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

These are the chief Passages of Scripture which are produced to prove the original Corruption of human Nature; and if they should prove that there is in Man an Inclination to Vice, they do not prove our Reason so corrupted as to be unable to judge of religious Matters. It does not appear that *Adam* had less Knowledge after the Fall than before; and therefore, notwithstanding any thing which we derived from him, we ought to make use of our Reason, especially in religious Matters, which are of the greatest Moment.

But against this Use of Reason, in religious Matters, there are other Passages of Scripture urg'd.

Thus, for Instance, *Rom. viii. 7.* 'tis said, *That the carnal Man is Enmity against God.* But the Apostle speaks here not against *Reason*, but against fulfilling the Lusts of the Flesh, which is to be *carnally minded*. This proceeds from the Devil, and is *Enmity against God*; but our Reason proceeds from God, and to be govern'd by that, is agreeable unto him. Our rational Faculties constitute us Men, and to employ them right is to act like them: But our sensual Appetites, when nourished, degrade us into Brutes. So that when our Reason is swallowed up by the brutal Part of us, then, indeed, Reason is no longer that Reason which is capable of judging.

Another Passage to shew the Weakness of human Reason to judge of religious Matters, is, *1 Cor. i. 19, 20.* But the Apostle's Design here is to take off the *Corinthians* from glorying in those false Apostles which opposed him. To which Purpose he tells them, that neither Skill, nor Learning, nor Eloquence, (Qualifications of the false Apostles) was that, for which God chose Men to be Preachers of the Gospel, but those, whom he made chioce

of for over-turning the Learned, were plain and illiterate Men.

So that the Apostle's reasoning amounts to this, That since the World, by their natural and acquir'd Parts, did not attain to a right Knowledge of God, God by the Preaching of the Gospel, which seem'd at first *Foolishness* to them, was pleas'd to communicate that Knowledge to those who were willing to receive it.

So that the most that can be inferr'd, is, that the Gospel Dispensation was not discoverable by Reason; but it does not follow, that when it is reveal'd, that we are not to use our Reason in examining it.

Again; 1 Cor. ii. 14. the Apostle tells us, *That the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God: For they are Foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

But, by the *natural* Man, he means only, that a Man, who has no other Help but his own natural Faculties, cannot receive the Truths of the Gospel, which are made known by the Spirit of God revealing them, and therefore they seem absurd to such a Man; nor can he, by the bare Use of his Reason, ever come to the Knowledge of them, because it is by studying divine Revelation that we attain this Knowledge.

But it does not follow from hence, that all Use of Reason is to be laid aside in those Things which Revelation discovers, for Revelation allows us to exercise our Reason about them.

But if by *natural* Man we understand an *animal* Man, in a vicious Sense, that is, one who relishes nothing but the Pleasures of the Body; the Truths of the Gospel will be Foolishness to such a one. But even he is capable of reasoning, otherwise the Things of the Gospel could not be said to be *Foolishness* unto him. He, indeed, judges wrong, and
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for that is justly blameable, but not for making use of his Reason.

In 1 Cor. iii. 18, 19, 20. the Apostle pursues the same Design, *viz.* to draw the *Corinthians* off from their Leader, who had set himself up in Opposition to the Apostle; and 'tis cunning Craftiness, not private Judgment, which he there speaks against.

Again; in 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, &c. The Apostle opposes his own Simplicity to the artful Eloquence of his Adversary. He does not speak of bringing his own Reason into Captivity, but of subduing his Adversary's, which could not be done without shewing better Arguments on his Side than he that opposed him.

Besides, the Apostle does not blame the Use of Reason in his Adversary, but the Abuse of it, in that it *exalted itself against the Knowledge of God.*

These are the chief Texts to shew how unfit Reason is to be set up as a Judge in religious Matters.

But there are other Texts alledged against the Use of Reason in interpreting Scripture for ourselves.

As, 2 Peter i. 20, 21. *Knowing this first, that no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation. For Prophecy came not in old Time by the Will of Man: But holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

From whence some would infer, that we cannot understand the Scripture without the Assistance of the Holy Ghost.

And that the Holy Ghost excludes all Use of our own Reason in this Matter.

But neither of these Points are conclusive. For the Apostle does not here speak of all Scripture, but only of the Prophecies of the *Old Testament.*

So that the *private Interpretation* of Prophecy here mention'd, by which is meant the Prophets

Interpretation of their own Prophecies, is not opposed to the Illumination of the Spirit, but to the Understandings of other Men, especially those who lived under the Gospel, who might understand the Meaning of those Prophecies, tho' the Prophets did not, who utter'd them.

Neither is all Interpretation, and all Understanding of the Scripture, here denied to the Prophets themselves, but only a thorough Knowledge of the mystical Sense of it, as it related to the Gospel Covenant.

But tho' we should suppose the Apostle to reason here as some would have him, it does not follow that we can understand nothing of Scripture without the particular Help of the Holy Ghost, but only that we cannot understand some Things so perfectly without it. Nor does it follow, that in those Instances, where the Assistance of the Holy Spirit is necessary, all Use of Reason is to be laid aside. But that Reason is not sufficient in its bare natural State, but must be enlighten'd by the Spirit of God.

And yet, after all this, these Words are capable of another Sense. And when the Apostle says, that *no Prophecy of the Scripture is of any private Interpretation*, he may mean no more than this, that the Prophets were inspired by the Holy Ghost, and that their Prophecies are to be looked upon as the Voice of that Holy Ghost, and not as any human private Conception.

Prov. xxv. 27. has been alledged against Enquiries into religious Matters, as apt to blind those who fixed their Eyes attentively upon them. For so this Passage runs in the vulgar Translation, *Scrutator Majestatis opprimetur à Gloria*, He that endeavours to take a near View of the Majesty of God shall be oppressed with his Glory.

But, 1st. This Mischief can only befall the Imprudent. If we contemplate Things divine,
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and endeavour after the Knowledge of them, in the Use of those Means, which both Reason and Revelation prescribe, there can be no Danger in such Enquiries.

What is there in divine Matters, as far as we are concern'd in them, which is too hard for our Reason; if we instance in the incomprehensible Nature of God, this is nothing to the Purpose;

For tho' it be requir'd of us, as the Condition of eternal Life, *to know God, and his Son Jesus Christ*, yet we are not obliged to a perfect Knowledge of him, but only to know the Relation he bears to us as our Creator, Governor, and Lord. So much Knowledge as will help forward this End is necessary, and so much we may learn from Scripture; and this will not prejudice, but compleat our Reason.

If any one should endeavour to know more of him than is reveal'd, he may experience the Truth of what *Solomon* says in this Sense, and be oppressed with the Glory he endeavours to see through.

But, 2dly. The Words in the Original have quite another Sense, and only reprove Men for searching out, and proclaiming their own Glory; for so the Verse runs in our Translation, *It is not good to eat much Honey: so for Men to search their own Glory, is not Glory*. This, indeed, is interpreted by the *Rabbies* of the Study of divine Things. We must not be too minute in our Enquiries into the Nature of these Things, because they are beyond the Reach of human Understanding. But if we take the Words in this Sense, they do not forbid that Use of Reason, in religious Matters, which I have been asserting.

I have already examin'd several Passages in *St. Paul's* Epistles, which have been urged against the Use of Reason in religious Matters, and have shewn, that they mean no more than this, that Man could never, by the bare Use of his Reason,
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arrive at those Discoveries which the Gospel has made. This also is his Design, 1 Cor. ii. where he distinguishes the *Wisdom of this World* from the *Wisdom of God*: Meaning by the one, such Knowledge as is attainable by Men's natural Abilities; by the other, such Knowledge as was built on the Authority of God alone, and is derived from Scripture.

This is what he also means, *Verse 10.* of this *Chapter*, where speaking of those Things which the Gospel has made known to us, he says, *That God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit----- For what Man doth know the Things of a Man, save the Spirit of a Man which is in him? Even so the Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God.*

1. But when the Spirit of God hath revealed these Things; they are revealed to our Understandings, and become Objects of our Examination: And this the Apostle intimates, *Ver. 15. He that is spiritual judgeth all Things.*

There are other Passages of Scripture produced against the Use of Reason, which, when they are examin'd, will be found not to be against such Use of Reason, but only against reasoning from such Principles as belong only to natural Things, and applying them to divine Matters.

Thus, for Instance, when God promised *Abraham* a Son, as that Promise was to be fulfill'd in an extraordinary Manner, so the Objection which *Sarah* made against it, from the common Course of Nature, was of no Force, and she was reprov'd for it, *Gen. xviii. 10, 11, 12.*

But *Abraham* reason'd better in this Case, and the Scripture gives us the highest Commendation of his Faith, upon Account of the Reasonableness of it. (See *Rom. iv. 18, &c.*)

Again, *Numb. xi. 18, &c.* when God promis'd the Children of *Israel* Flesh to the full, *Moses* was guilty of the same wrong Reasoning, who thought
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that to be brought about by common Means, which God design'd to do after a miraculous Manner.

Another Instance of this Nature we meet with in Chap. xx. 11, 12. when *Moses* fetched Water of the stony Rock to supply the People with Drink.

The Mistake also of *Naaman* lay in this, that he thought that Cure must be perform'd by natural Means, which was to be effected in a miraculous Manner, 2 *Kings* v. 11, &c.

The same fallie Way of Reasoning the *Jews* run into with Regard to our Saviour's Understanding, *Matt.* xiii. 54, &c. they knew his Education to be such, as made it impossible for him to acquire those Talents, in an ordinary Way, they found him possess'd of; and their Error consisted in this, that they took him to be a mere Man, and that he had no other than human Means to make use of.

His Disciples were often so deceived when he propos'd to feed the Multitudes, *Matt.* xv. 32, &c.

This false Reasoning occasion'd the Objection which the *Sadducees* made against the Resurrection, *Matt.* xxii. 23. They thought we should be in the same Circumstances in the other World, which we are in here. Whereas, if they had consider'd how different our future State will be, there would have been no Ground for any such Objection.

The same wrong Reasoning appears in the Objections which were made against the Conception and Birth of *John Baptist*, and our Saviour, which as they were promis'd immediately by God, so it was no just Exception against them, that they were beyond the common Course of Nature.

Such Instances as these are brought by some to weaken the Authority of Reason. But this is not a right Use of Reason, which consists in judging of every Thing by its proper Principles, or at least by such general Principles as include these.

The not observing of this Rule was the Occasion of that Fault in reasoning, which Logicians call *μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος*, and is included in these Words of the Apostle: *And this, I say, lest any Man should beguile you, παραλογίζηται*, with enticing Words.

Having taken a View of the principal Passages of Scripture alledged against the Use of Reason in religious Matters, it will be necessary to consider those Passages which enjoin the Use of Reason in religious Matters, and reprove Men for neglecting to do so.

In the *Old Testament* the Idolaters are reproved for not making Use of their Reason, and their Sin is ascribed to this neglect, *Isa. xlv. 18, 19. xlv. 8. Jer. iv. 22. viii. 7. Isa. i. 3. xiv. 22. Psalm xxxii. 9. xiv. 4.*

In the *New Testament*, *Matt. viii. 2.* our Saviour commends the Centurion's Faith, because it proceeded upon the Principles of right Reason, *Matt. viii. 2.* In the Parable of the Sower, *Matt. xiii. 19, 23.* our Saviour joins hearing and understanding the Word together, and makes one altogether unprofitable without the other.

In *Chap. xvi. 3.* our Saviour reproves the *Pharisees* for not discerning the Time of the Messiah's Coming, which supposes they were to use their own Reason, and that thereby they might have known the Time.

When the Disciples mistook this Caution, *Take Heed of the Leaven of the Pharisees*, our Saviour reproves them for not reasoning better, *Mark viii. 15.* and our Saviour tells the *Saducees*, *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*; which supposes they might have understood better if they had read the Scriptures attentively.

Our Saviour advises the *Jews*, *John v. 39.* to *search the Scriptures*; but this Advice had been to no Purpose, if they were not to have made use of their Reason in finding what they searched for.

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St. *Paul* commends the *Bereans* for searching the Scriptures.

In *Rom.* x. 17. the Apostle tells us, that *Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God.* But this *Hearing* must be joined to Understanding, without which there can be no Believing.

In Chap. xii. 1. that Religion which we are to practise, is called our *reasonable Service*; but this supposes we are to exercise our Reason about it.

In 1 *Cor.* x. 15. the Apostle appeals to the common Sense of Mankind for the Truth of what he says.

In Chap. xiv. he bids us not *be Children in Understanding*, but use our Reason.

And at Verse 29. after he had given Directions for the profitable Exercise of their Gifts in the Assemblies, he adds, *Let the Prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge*; that is, examine the Matter.

2 *Cor.* xiii. 5. the Apostle exhorts to examine their Religion.

In *Eph.* v. 6. we are caution'd against being deceived with *vain Words*. But 'tis by the Help of our Understanding that we discern such Impositions. *Be ye not, therefore, unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is.*

In 2. *Tim.* iii. St. *Paul* foretelling a great Apostacy from the Faith, among other Characters of the Apostates, tells us, that they are *Men of corrupt Minds, reprobate concerning the Faith*, Ver. 9. or, as it is in the Margin, *Men of no Judgment*, their Apostacy being ascribed to their not using their Reason.

St. *Peter*, 1 Epist. Chap. ii. 2. exhorts us to *desire the sincere Milk of the Word*. And in Chap. iii. 15. *to be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us.*

In many other Cases no Man has a Right to demand a Reason of our Actions. But Religion being of publick Concern, and it being every Man's Duty

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ty to set forward the Salvation of his Neighbour, every Man may demand a Reason of our Conduct; and what we are obliged to give one, which we cannot do, unless we understand the Reasons of our Faith.

St. *John*, 1 Epist. iv. bids us *not to believe every Spirit*, and *to try whether they are of God*. He does not say, because there are many false Prophets, that, therefore, there are no true Prophets; but because there are so many false Prophets in the World, we must use great Care that we be not imposed upon.

And thus I have consider'd and endeavour'd to answer all the material Objections against this Liberty of private Judgment in religious Matters, and have farther examin'd how this Matter stands in Scripture, and what can be alledged either for, or against the Use of Reason out of the Word of God.

That Reason is a proper Judge in all Doubts and Disputes about religious Matters is evident. For 'tis by the Faculty of Reason, by the Sagacity and Judgment, which that is possessed of, that we understand one another's Meaning, discern the Sense of Scripture as well as of other Books. 'Tis this Faculty that enables us to comprehend the Meaning of those Things which are proposed to us, and to judge of their Truth or Falshood.

If it be said, that tho' Reason be a proper Judge of *natural* Things, 'tis unable to judge of divine Things. I answer, Reason is not to be confin'd to *natural* Things, as if we wanted some other Faculty to judge of divine Matters. The same Eyes and Ears will serve to read and hear the Scriptures, as any other Book; and the same Reason which we make use of in judging of human Writings will enable us to comprehend the Sense of the inspir'd Writings. If this will not do, there is no understanding these Things at all, since we have no other Faculty to employ about them.

If it be farther said, that there are other Helps besides Reason, such as the *Scripture*, *Faith*, the *Church*, and the *Spirit* of God; and, therefore, Reason is not itself a proper Judge in this Case. In answer, we do not exclude the Use of other Helps. These which were just now mention'd require the Use of Reason.

The Sense of *Scripture* must be judg'd of by Reason.

Faith follows the Perception of the Agreement of our Ideas, and is such an Assent as supposes Knowledge, and includes the Use of our Reason.

And the *Church* is no other Way a Judge of Truth and Falshood, but by the Help of sound Reason, with which the Members of it are endu'd.

As to what concerns the *Spirit* of God, we do not allow that we can understand nothing of divine Matters without that particular Assistance of the Spirit; and then 'tis to be remembred, that the Illumination of the Spirit does not contradict or supersede the Use of Reason. If we could understand nothing in divine Matters, without the peculiar Help of the Spirit, why do we dispute with those who differ from us in Religion? This would be to no Purpose, if they could understand nothing without the Spirit: And if they have the Spirit, we grant them to be in the Right, which is inconsistent with the Difference between us; or else we must own, that Men are capable of understanding divine Matters without the Help of the Spirit. And yet, there are many Things in *Scripture* which cannot be perfectly understood without the particular Gift of the Spirit. But these are such as they who do not thoroughly understand them, may both believe the Gospel and attain their Salvation. Hence 'tis said, that the Spirit is given only to them who believe; not that they may understand something to believe, which they already do, but that they may understand more for the Confirmation

96 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*
on of their own Faith, and the Information of others.

And even this Illustration of the Spirit does not suppress, but improve our Reason, and makes clear what is obscure; and, therefore, we are exhorted to exert our Faculties, even when we are promis'd the Assistance of God's Spirit.

Thus far we meet with nothing which should make us think that Reason is not capable of judging in divine as well as natural Things.

To this it may be objected, that the Scriptures contain some Things contrary to Reason. But to this, I answer, that nothing can be Matter of divine Revelation, which is evidently contrary to Reason, since Reason itself is nothing else but natural Revelation, which God cannot contradict without contradicting himself. And we cannot have greater Evidence of the Truth and Meaning of any Revelation, than we have of the Falseness of that which contradicts our Reason.

But this is far from being the Case of any in Scripture, if we examine those Particulars, which are said to be contrary to Reason. Of this Sort are reckon'd the Miracles recorded.

But these are not contrary to Reason, if we reason from such Principles as are proper in such Cases, which cannot be natural Principles, because the Effects are supposed to be supernatural.

Indeed should Reason conclude these Things not to be performed even by a divine Power, Reason then would contradict Scripture; but Reason would rather conclude, that from a superior Power might be expected superior Effects.

So as to Prophecies and Predictions contain'd in Scripture: Tho' these are beyond any human Fore-sight, it does not follow, that God does not know whatever will be, and cannot communicate this Knowledge to others.

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But tho' divine Matters are not contrary to Reason, yet, it may be said, that they are *above* Reason. To this I answer, that if by being above Reason no more is meant, than that these Things could not be known, without our being taught them by one who knew them; in this Sense, not only divine, but natural Things may be said to be above Reason. And as it is improper to say, that these Things are above Reason, because we cannot know them without being taught; so it is to call divine Things above Reason, because we could not have known them, if they had not been reveal'd to us.

But further, it is not absolutely true, that we could know nothing of divine Matters, if they had not been reveal'd to us. The great Points of natural Religion, *viz.* the Being of God, the Difference of Good and Evil, &c. may be deduced from the Consideration of natural Things. And as those of revealed Religion, *viz.* the Redemption of the World by Jesus Christ, the Resurrection of the Body, &c. they may rather be said to be above Nature and Philosophy, than above Reason. But tho' Reason could be no Judge in these Points, without the Help of Scripture; yet, if Reason enlightened by Scripture be able to pass a Judgment upon these Things, that is all we contend for.

If it be farther objected, that Reason, even assisted by Revelation, cannot comprehend divine Things. I answer, it cannot perfectly comprehend them; and, in this Sense, natural Things are above our Reason. But our Reason, with the Assistance of Scripture, is able to arrive at so much Knowledge of divine Matters, as to secure our Salvation, and promote that of others.

There are, indeed, two Cases wherein Reason must submit to Faith.

First, When such Things are reveal'd to us as are beyond the Reach of Reason. This is, strictly

98 *The true Notion of the Exercise of*

speaking, pure Matter of Faith: And, if it be certain, that there is such a Revelation, and the Sense of it is plain, it ought to be no Objection against the Belief of it, that it could never be known by Reason, had it not been reveal'd.

Secondly, Where the Matter is not so far above our Reach, but the Mind may arrive at a probable Determination of it; but such a Probability as does not exclude a Possibility of the contrary's being true, there Revelation ought to take Place, and we must believe whatever is so reveal'd; since nothing less than the absolute Certainty of the Falseness of any Proposition should make us reject it, if it comes attested with Revelation.

In these two Cases, Reason must always submit to Faith. In all other Cases, Reason is to be hearken'd to as the proper Judge, and when we use it by those Helps and Rules I have laid down, it will lead us into all necessary Truth.

Having shewn, that the Use of Reason is enjoined in Scripture,

I come now to show the Mischiefs and Dangers arising from *Free-thinking*, falsely so called.

As the right Use of our Reason is of great Benefit to true Religion, so there is nothing of more Disservice to it, than a partial Examination.

The best Things always suffer most by being ill treated. So it fares with Religion, which as it is a Matter of great Importance, so it is most capable of being ridicul'd; and therefore if in our Treatment of it, we have no Regard to the Subject, we shall both prejudice ourselves and the Cause.

If Men come to the Study of Religion, without a sincere Love of Truth, the strongest Arguments won't convince them. Instead of hearkening to sound Reason they will doubt in the plainest Truths, till they are fitted to swallow the grossest Absurdities, if they be advanced against Religion.

Thus

Thus dangerous it is to a Man's self to indulge this Humour, and it does great Disservice to Religion, which, tho' it cannot be hurt by sober Argument, may be exposed by profane Jests.

These make bad Impressions upon weak Minds. And, therefore, thus to treat Religion, will lessen that Veneration we ought to have for it, and bring it at last into Contempt.

Again; Tho' to examine thoroughly into the Principles of Religion, is the best Way to establish ourselves in the Faith. Yet to indulge a sceptical Humour of calling every Thing into Question, will make us Infidels.

The same ill Effect has the requiring greater Evidence, for the Truths of Religion, than is reasonable in itself, or the Nature of the Thing will bear.

This makes Men doubt what is sufficiently attested, and hinders them from embracing it. 'Tis, to the full, as bad to make Men reject the Truth as to persuade them to believe a Lye, and much worse in the present Case, because Men never suffer ordinarily speaking, by believing Religion, if it should be false, but they will be Losers by rejecting it, if it proves true.

They greatly mistake the Nature of Religion, who require such Proofs of it, as amount to a Demonstration.

For Religion, more particularly the Christian Religion, was design'd to try Men's Sincerity. And, therefore, if the Writings of that Book carried an irresistible Evidence with them, all Men would be sincere Christians upon Account of the Greatness of the Reward.

Whereas, the Reward being proposed with any Degree of Evidence that comes short of absolute Certainty, hereby good and bad Men will be easily known. For he that is good, will easily believe the Reward that is promised to the Practice of

Goodness, tho' he is not absolutely certain of it; and this will make him exert himself to obtain it.

But he who has no Relish for Goodness, when he hears any thing of the Reward which is promised by our Saviour to those who do such Things, the greater it is, the less he believes it. And if he comes to have any Opinion of it, 'tis so weak, as not to make him forsake his evil Ways.

And, therefore, God has not made the Reward of eternal Life so manifest; nor the Books of the *New Testament* so free from all Exception, as not to be called in Question.

He has thought it sufficient that these Books, which give an Account of the Reward, should be such as are satisfactory to every honest Man; but not to those who are perverse. That by this Means his Justice might be clear'd in punishing the one, and his Mercy glorified in rewarding the other.

So that to refuse our Assent to Religion, till we have Demonstration of its Truth, is to destroy the Nature of Faith, which consists in submitting to such Evidence as the Things we believe are capable of.

Again; As this false Free-thinking neglects or disdains the Use of proper Helps in its Enquiries about religious Matters, it cannot but be prejudicial to Religion, which has its Rudiments, in which Men must be instructed in order to their knowing Religion; and if these are neglected, the Superstructure will come to nothing.

Thus, for Instance, since the main Doctrine of the Gospel is founded upon the Supposition of *Adam's* Fall, we cannot form a true Notion of the Christian Scheme, and understand the Benefits our Saviour has purchased for us, without knowing the Damages we received by *Adam's* Fall; the mistaking this has occasion'd the grossest Errors, and many disadvantageous Representations of the Doctrine of the Gospel.

Again;

Again; The Books of the *New Testament* cannot be understood without requisite Helps; and 'tis owing to the Neglect of these that there are so many absurd Doctrines.

These are some of the Mischiefs which arise from Free-thinking, falsely so call'd, as it consists in a neglect of the Rules of right Reasoning.

But if we take this false Free-thinking as it consists in a Design of misrepresenting Religion, the Mischief, it does, is greater, and the Guilt deeper. 'Tis in itself easier to confound than clear Things, and to make Men wicked than good. And when Men of Learning turn all their Study to undermine Truth, they are capable of doing incredible Mischief; tho' they will be severely punish'd for it.

Thus we have seen both the Use and Abuse of Reason in religious Matters; and how highly agreeable to Reason, Religion, especially the Christian Religion is; and with what Advantage it appears, when 'tis fairly examin'd, and according to the Rules of right Reasoning. And if we be sincere in our Practice of *proving all Things*, notwithstanding all the Arts and Endeavours of the Enemies of Religion, we shall be able to find, and *hold fast that which is good*.

Bishop *L E N G*'s

Natural OBLIGATIONS

To believe the

PRINCIPLES of RELIGION

A N D

DIVINE REVELATION.

AS there are some Men who pretend not yet to be persuaded of the Truth or Importance of the Christian Religion; and others that are diffident of the Principles of all Religion, or, at least, are willing to dispute themselves into a Disbelief of it, I will endeavour to persuade them, from common Reason, that it is their Duty not to be unconcern'd in the Case, but to give the Arguments that have been, or may be, offer'd in Behalf of the Principles of Religion, a fair Hearing and Examination. And, in order to this, I desire they would impartially consider the following Particulars.

I. That there may be other probable Causes of Infidelity often assign'd besides Want of Evidence; even when this is pretended as an Excuse of it.

II. That the Principles of Religion are of such an high Nature, as concern Mankind, as rational Creatures, to be satisfied about them.

III. That

III. That if we have sufficient Reason to believe the great Principles of Religion, viz. the Being of God, and a Providence, and a future State, &c. our Unbelief will not excuse us from a Crime in the Sight of God.

IV. That it is unreasonable for any Man to endeavour to persuade others out of the Principles of Religion, till he himself is first evidently convinced, that they are false and disadvantageous to Mankind.

V. That 'tis more unreasonable to make them the Subject of Ridicule.

I. That there may be other probable Causes of Infidelity often assign'd, besides Want of Evidence, even when this is pretended as an Excuse.

They that disbelieve the great Truths of Religion, must needs own, that those who do believe them, believe upon insufficient Arguments, or else they would be self-condemned for not believing; and, therefore, they must also own, that as much of the Belief as has no competent Argument to support it, must be founded upon some wrong Disposition or Prejudice of the Believer, tho' he may not be aware of any such Prejudice. Now, certainly, if Credulity may arise from such a Bias, Incredulity may also proceed from another Bias. For we see, in other Cases, that the very same Arguments proposed in the very same Light to different Men, even of the same natural Abilities, shall have very different Effects. And yet both Sides are unwilling to own any Defect or Prejudice in themselves; and chuse rather to blame the Argument, or the Understanding of other People who differ from them.

And as it is in other Cases, so it is in Religion; the Arguments of the Truth of it may be very good, but some Men may be indisposed for the receiving of them.

As for Instance,

1. Some Men are so far immers'd in the Things of this Life, in the Pursuits of Riches or Pleasures, that they will be at no Pains to consider whether there be any Force in such Arguments, as relate to the being of a God, and a future State, or no.

Others, by indulging their Lusts, contract a Stupidity towards Things of a higher Nature ; or by too easily entertaining such Prejudices as favour their corrupt Inclinations, grow unwilling to admit of any Thing that contradicts them. Every vicious Inclination is a strong Bias upon the Mind, either towards Infidelity, or, at least, towards such corrupt Notions, of the Nature of God, as insensibly lead Men to it.

Thus the *Epicureans*, placing the utmost of human Happiness in Ease and Indolence, were easily drawn to believe the same of the divine Happiness ; and from thence to conclude, that there could not be any Providence of God which concern'd itself with the Affairs of the World, for all such Concern would destroy its own Ease and Happiness.

2. The Vices of the Mind, as well as the bodily Appetites, without a sincere and honest Attention to the secret Working of Men's own Hearts, may produce as perverse Effects in their Reasonings, and more incurable.

For Infidelity may often arise from Pride and Self-conceit, which disposes Men of Parts and Learning to an Affectation of Singularity, and a Desire of seeming wiser than other People, by maintaining Paradoxes, and contradicting all Opinions that are vulgarly received, for that very Reason because they are so.

And they that are of a lighter and vainer Temper, and value themselves upon an Appearance of Wit in Conversation, proceed sometimes to ridicule Things of the highest Nature and Concern, instead of arguing soberly about them.

But besides these personal Indispositions of Mind,

Mind, which may give a strong Bias towards Infidelity, there is one Thing farther, which appears to have great Influence over some Men's Reasoning, even in the first Principles of Religion; and that is,

3. An inconsiderate and indistinguishing Aversion to Superstition, which Evil, they think, can never be cured, but by destroying the very Foundation of Religion itself. Whereas Superstition has not its Original from Religion, or a true Sense of God, but from a false and perverse Opinion of the Deity, or from taking something else for God which is not so.

And'tis a very uncomfortable Cure for this Evil to endeavour to banish the Belief of the true God, the most excellent and lovely of all Beings, out of our Minds.

Thus I have endeavour'd to shew that there may be other Grounds of Men's Infidelity, besides Want of Evidence, in the Principles of Religion.

II. I proceed in the next Place to consider, that the Principles of Religion are of such an high Nature, as concern Mankind, as rational Creatures, to be satisfied about them.

It seems to be very reasonable, that every Creature should make the best Use of its own Powers that it can, let those Powers come either from Chance or Design; and to employ and improve them in the best Manner. Now if Men have Reason and Understanding, and a Power of applying them to different Subjects, some of which tend more than others to the improving those Faculties, and of rendering the best Part of us more compleat; if we are, in the least, conscious of our Abilities, to chuse how we will apply them, we cannot do ourselves Right without such Application.

But if it should be alledged, that we have, indeed, no such Power at all, but that all our Reasonings

sonings are the meer Effect of Matter and Motion working upon us; then, I confess, Men cannot be charged with either helping or hindring their own Reasonings.

But let it be allowed, that we have any Power over our own Actions, and can chuse which Way we will apply our Thoughts; if we are capable of any free Use of the Understanding, as those, who are pleased to call themselves Free -thinkers, ought to grant, since they make it the very Definition of Free-thinking: Then if we would act like other Men, that can use this Power, we ought to consider how we came into the World, and from whence we had those Powers of Mind which we have, or think we have. And since we may be certain, that we did not make ourselves, or bring ourselves into this Part of the World, or chuse this Rank of Beings, in which we are placed; whether we be pleased or displeased, with being what we are, it is very reasonable for us to consider whether we have any Power to continue ourselves in this Condition, if we like it, or to alter it, if we like it not. And if we also find that we have not any such Ability, we ought then to enquire whether there be any other superior Power, which may be concern'd with us or for us, from whom we may expect Assistance, upon Application to it. And, until we have made such Enquiry, we cannot be said to have shewn any just Concern for our own Being.

Nay, suppose some of our Fellow-Creatures have told us accidentally, they believe, or have heard, that there is some such superior Being as exercises a Power over us; or suppose we ourselves have had some casual Suggestions about it, upon viewing the Things without us; no Man can excuse himself to his own Reason, that would never examine in earnest whether such Suggestions had any Foundation; there being no

Exercise

Exercise of the Mind more proper, because there is nothing in which a Man's self is more immediately concern'd than this. I come, therefore, as a farther Enforcement of this, to shew,

III. That if we have sufficient Reason to believe the great Principles of Religion, *viz.* the Being of a God, and a Providence, and a future State, &c. our Unbelief will not excuse us from a Crime in the Sight of God.

Some of late Years have insinuated, that if a Man should be supposed to incur any Penalty from God for want of any Belief, tho' it were that of his own Being, it would be a great Diminution to that entire Freedom of Thinking, which they pretend God has made a natural Right of every Man. Now if these Patrons of *Free-thinking* would keep honestly to their own Definition of *Free-thinking*, and mean no more by it than only, *the Use of the Understanding, in endeavouring to find out the Meaning of any Proposition whatsoever, in considering the Nature of the Evidence for and against it, and in judging of it according to the seeming Force or Weakness of the Evidence*; no Man of Understanding would oppose such Freedom. But if instead of defending Men's Right to use their Understandings; under the Name of *Free-thinking*, they are pleased to call any odd or extravagant Opinion *Free-thinking*, a Man must use his Understanding very untowardly, that can believe this consistent with the Definition. For if, as these Authors seem to allow, *The Knowledge of some Truths be required of us by God, and if the Knowledge of others be useful to Society*, then, certainly, the holding at all Adventures, Assertions, contrary to such Truths, cannot be any Instance of such *Free-thinking*, as we have a Right to, but either the Want of Thinking, or the Abuse of it.

I readily own that God has never obliged us to know or believe any Truth, but what he has given us some previous Means of knowing, or
sufficient.

sufficient Ground of believing; but then he may certainly oblige us to use those Means honestly, and require a sincere Love of Truth from us. He that allows us to reason freely, may certainly command us to reason justly; and in whatsoever Way he condescends to teach us, we ought to be ready to be inform'd. Now these Authors grant, that *to be inform'd consists in being made to think justly of Things*. And to be obliged to this, in the Application of our Reason, is no more contrary to the free Use of our Understanding, than obliging us to the Practice of Virtue and Morality is to the Freedom of our Wills. To think freely, is to consider impartially the Nature of the Evidence for, or against, any Truth. But to contradict a Truth, without enquiring into it, only because it is vulgarly received, is not *Free-thinking*, but Bondage of Thought. For Thinking, according to their own Definition, implies Reasoning; but the affirming or denying any Proposition at a Venture, is not Reasoning, and, therefore, not Thinking, much less *Free-thinking*, according to the Definition.

For, according to these Authors, What is a *Restraint of Free-thinking on any Subject*, but *some-what which hinders me from thinking on that Subject*? 'Tis no Matter, therefore, whether the Hindrance be from without, or from within, provided I am hindered.

But, I believe, the greatest Hindrances to Freedom of Thinking, and Reasoning, are their Pride, or their Passions, their Pleasure, or their Sloth; and they that will not free themselves from their vicious Dispositions, do in vain arrogate to themselves the specious Title of *Free-thinkers*, who have no other Pretence to it, except the assuming a Liberty of denying the plainest Truths.

True Liberty of Action does not consist in doing what we please, but in being free from all outward Force, to govern ourselves by the Law
of

of Reason; and he is no more free, that is a Slave to his Passions, than he that is subject to the Will of another Man. So Freedom of Thinking does not consist in an Ability to dissent from the Principles of Reason, but in being superior to all those Prejudices, which hinder us from assenting to them. If, therefore, God has given us such a Liberty, he may make us responsible to himself for the Use of it; and to suppose that we are so responsible, is not to deny this Freedom, but to assert it, because if we had it not, we could not be answerable for the Abuse of it. Now, upon this Foundation, we are oblig'd to enquire into the Grounds of Religion, and bring them into a fair Examination; and the Reason why God may condemn us for our Infidelity, is, because, if we use this Freedom right, we must be convinced. Whatever evil Consequences, therefore, are threatned to Unbelievers, they are not design'd to hinder our Freedom of Enquiry into the Grounds of our Belief, but to excite our Diligence in enquiring. If the Evidence of a supreme Being, and some other first Principles of Religion, be such as will not force itself upon us without our own Attention, but yet be such as cannot without a manifest Misuse of our Understanding, be withstood, when attended to, it must be an *evil Heart of Unbelief*, that *departs from the living God*: And what the Consequences of such Departure may be, we may learn from himself. Upon this Principle the Christian Religion, conscious of its own Truth, freely offers itself to the strictest Scrutiny, and commands us *to prove all Things* in order to *hold fast that which is good*, which two are no Ways inconsistent with one another. For where an impartial Enquiry will necessarily lead us to acknowledge a fundamental Truth, there the owning that Truth may as justly be the Subject of a Command, as the sincere Use of the Means leading to it. And God
may

may punish the Perverseness of our Wills in one Case as well as the other.

I proceed now to consider.

IV. That it is unreasonable to endeavour to persuade others out of the Principles of Religion, till a Man is first convinced that they are false and disadvantageous to Mankind. And if this were granted, I believe, that those who dispute in Favour of Atheistical Principles would be reduced to a small Number. For, however singular some Men may love to appear, in their Reasonings with others, ye if we could come at their secret Thoughts of the Matter, I do not question but we should find, that they have many secret Misgivings in their Minds upon their own profess'd Arguments, however they may bear up against such inward Doubts and Fears: This is confess'd by *Lucretius* himself. [*Lib. 3. v. 41.*]

Now this Proceeding is justly to be complain'd of, that Men should go about, by all Ways, to weaken the Belief of that in others, which they themselves, at the Bottom, either own to be true, or, at least, are not fully satisfied of the contrary. It is an unreasonable Practice in Respect of God, supposing him to be; and in Respect of Men supposing them to believe his Being. For,

1. Suppose it be true that there is a God and a Providence, it may be, that he is such a King and Judge of Men's Actions, as Men own him to be. Now if I go about to weaken Men's Belief of his Being, I seduce them from their natural Allegiance they think they owe him. Suppose then it were not known what Punishment he would inflict upon such Seducers; yet they could not but think it reasonable, that he should treat them in a different Manner from his faithful Subjects. Tho' his Goodness be infinite, yet it cannot but look upon such Men as criminal, and the greater his Goodness is, the more criminal it is, to abuse it,
and

and to withdraw others from it. This makes it an unreasonable Practice in Respect of God. But,

2. In Respect of Men it is unreasonable, because, unless we are sure they are under a Delusion, and that we can make their Condition the better by undeceiving them, we act very unkindly in trying to persuade them they are deceiv'd, in an Opinion of that Being on which their Happiness depends. Nay, if a Man were fully persuaded that there is no God, yet so long as he knows that the Belief of him is what all good Men may take Comfort in, it would be very spiteful to endeavour to rob them of this Comfort without proposing something better. But when we can pretend to no such Persuasion, to attempt the same Thing is intolerable. They who imagine that Religion was invented for the good Government of the World, must own its Usefulness to Society. And, therefore, unless they could propose something more for the Good of others, or themselves it would certainly, be their wisest Way to keep this secret to themselves, if they had it; but when they have it not, it is malicious to persuade others that they have it. And therefore, it is an impious Custom to dispute against the Being of a God, whether it be done in earnest, or only in Pretence and Affectation.

This leads me to consider,

V. That it is still more unreasonable to make these Principles of Religion the Subject of Ridicule.

We naturally say, such a Thing is *no jesting Matter*, where the Life or Estate, or Interest of any Man is concern'd; if so, certainly the Being of a God, and a future Judgment, and the like, are Things of vastly more Moment to those, who believe them, than the greatest worldly Interest can be.

And this, even they, that pretend not to believe them, cannot but know; and therefore even Decency, and common Respect to the Sentiments

timents of Mankind, should make them forbear such unreasonable Jestings.

But, granting, [according to a certain Author, *See Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, p. 61, &c.] that Truth itself cannot suffer by such Usage, for what is true cannot be made false by being ridiculed, yet certainly it may lose very much of that good Effect, which it might otherwise have upon the Minds of Men by being thus treated.

All Men cannot distinguish between what is ridiculed, and what really deserves to be so ; and therefore much Mischief may be done before a proper Cure can be applied.

And thus I have gone thro' those several Considerations I proposed at first, as a Preparative towards the sincere and impartial weighing and examining the Principles of Religion.

And what I would recommend to all those, who desire to find the Truth in Matters of Religion, is Sincerity of Heart. Let them honestly examine their own Hearts in the first Place, before they offer to judge of the Evidence, whether there be not in them any secret Wish or Desire that Religion may not be true, because it crosses some favourite Passion ; whether there be nothing of Pride or Self-conceit, which makes them affect an Opinion, because it is new ; and whether they have not taken unreasonable Offence at all Religion, because of the Abuses that have been made of it. Because any of these, or the like Prejudices, will certainly indispose them towards the sincere Search of Truth ; and will make both the Arguments and Objections appear very different from what they really are.

That the Belief of God's Existence is necessarily supposed in all those, who willingly shew any Sort of Veneration towards such a Being is evident.

Even *Epicurus* himself, tho' he denied all Providence,

vidence, yet was forced to own some Sort of excellent and happy Beings, whom he called Gods, tho' he founded the Decency of this Veneration only upon the Excellency of the Nature of Gods above Men, and not upon any Concern that they had for Mankind upon his Principle.

But such Men, consistently with their *Hypothesis*, cannot either ask any Thing of God, or expect any Thing from him, while they believed him not to be concern'd for Mankind.

And therefore *Tully* makes even *Cotta* the Academic (whose Province it was not to own the same Certainty or Assurance, in those Matters, which the other Sects of Philosophers did) plainly to condemn this Hypothesis, as the Ruin of all Piety and Religion. [*See Tully de N. D. lib. 1. cap. 20, 41, 43, 44.*]

This then ought to be look'd upon as agreeable to the common Reason of Mankind, that a Belief of a God, and a Providence, and that he will some Way or other reward good Men, is a necessary Foundation of Religion.

But because there are some who think Religion and Morality to be Things so distinct in Nature, that they may be separated in Fact; and, therefore, tho' they allow that no Man can be a religious Man, without believing some religious Principle; yet, as to all human Duties arising from them as Men, wherein they think the Sum of all Morality consists, they would persuade us, that they may well enough be secured without any such Belief; and consequently, that no moral Principles can oblige a Man to the Belief of a God and Providence, and that there is no Virtue or Necessity to believe any invisible Principle. I design therefore, to set some of the Arguments for the Being of a God and Providence, &c. in such Light, as may not only shew the Certainty of the Thing, but our na-

tural Obligation to the Belief of it, as we are rational Creatures. By which it will appear, that we cannot perform all those Duties incumbent on us, as Men, without Respect had to something above or beyond our Nature; and, consequently, that Atheism and Infidelity are inconsistent with any sure and lasting moral Principles. And the Method I shall take, shall be this.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, that according to the general Sentiments of Mankind, there cannot be any perfect Morality expected, where there is no Belief of the first Principles of Religion.

II. That therefore all Societies of Men, that have ever been, have always profess'd the Belief of God's Existence, and at least some Kind of Providence, and some Expectations of divine Rewards and Punishments.

III. That this universal Belief did not arise from any Art or Contrivance, in order to keep Men in Awe, but was really antecedent to it, and built upon a more universal Principle.

IV. This will lead me to consider upon what Foundation this general Belief is built.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, that according to the general Sentiments of Mankind, there cannot be any perfect Morality expected, where there is no Belief of the first Principles of Religion.

Tully argues, that if *Piety towards God was removed, there would be an End of all Fidelity*; and accordingly in Fact it has always been found that in those Places where there has been little Sense of God and Religion, or where the Notions of Religion have been corrupted, there the Manners of Men have been always most brutish; and, on the contrary, where Men have the justest Notions of the Deity and a Providence, there all moral Virtues have flourish'd. I own, indeed that Men's Notions of Religion itself may be so depraved, as to become the Occasion of much Mischief.

Mischief. And Superstition may overwhelm the common Principles of Morality in divers Instances. And on the other Hand, there may possibly be found a particular Man of so good a Disposition, as to behave himself with Decency in all the common Offices of Life, without any previous reflecting upon the Obligations of Religion ; and whose Practice is therefore better than his Principles. But now, as it would, in the first Case, be very unreasonable to charge those Evils upon Religion, which are occasion'd by the Corruption of it ; so in the second Case, to assert the Uselessness of religious Principles from some single Instances, would be equally absurd.

The Question then, is not whether a particular thoughtful Man may not see the natural Fitness of a great many moral Actions, and practise them abstractedly from all other Considerations : Nor whether some Men may not hold inconsistent Principles, which, if duly attended to, would destroy one another. But the Question is, whether, if the Minds of Men were not generally influenced by the Apprehensions of something distinct from this Principle of meer Fitness of Actions to the Nature of Things, it could ever be possible for the Generality of Mankind to have any such Notions of moral Good and Evil, as to keep awake what we call natural Conscience in them. My Meaning is, that without the Belief of a supreme Being, to whom we are accountable for what we do, such a Law, supposed to arise merely from the Fitness of Things, would have little Influence : It would be as ineffectual to the greatest Part of Mankind as a human Law, without any Sanction annexed, or the Apprehension of any Magistrate to put it in Execution. 'Tis possible some Men may have that Benevolence to Society as to be a Law unto themselves, and do what is right of their own Accord. But what is

this to the Bulk of Mankind? And even this cannot be expected where the Notions of a Deity are excluded. We are to take human Nature, as it generally is, and to consider what Belief has the greatest Influence over human Nature; and if we do this, we shall find, that Infidelity is utterly inconsistent with a perfect Morality, and that upon these two Accounts.

1. Because, if there be no Belief of a God and a Providence, nor any Expectation of future Rewards and Punishments, from any invisible Being, there cannot be any sufficient Bond of Morality between Man and Man.

2. Because, if there be really a God, that has any Concern with us, a compleat Morality must necessarily have Respect to him, as well as to our Intercourse with one another.

1. Because, if there be no Belief of a God, &c. there cannot be any sufficient Bond of Morality between Man and Man.

If, indeed, the Actions of Men were directed by Sense only, Morality would be nothing else, but living according to natural Instinct, nor would any Kind of Belief be necessary to such Actions; but this is not the Morality of Men endued with Understanding and Will, nor is it what gives them such a Conscience of their own Actions, as to raise any Satisfaction or Displeasure with themselves after the Actions are over. For that is a Thing of a much higher Nature, which requires Reason and Reflection, and some Application of Mind, both to Things past and future, as well as present; and consequently, must suppose a Belief of something invisible, upon which we are moved to Action in a reasonable Way, and a comparing our Actions with some antecedent Law, for the Transgression of which, we inwardly judge ourselves accountable to some superior Being. And to this Purpose let it be observed,

(1.) That all human Actions, not merely animal, depend upon the Belief of something invisible, that is, that Men never designedly undertake any thing considerable, but they expect to acquire some Good, or avoid some Evil by it. And tho' this Consideration may seem not to have any great Relation to the Belief of a Providence; yet, I cannot but observe, that these Probabilities of the future Consequences of human Actions, by which Men are excited to perform this or that, have more or less Weight with them, as Men are more or less persuaded of an overruling Power. For the more chance rules, the less can any Prospect of the future be depended on; and the more uncertain the Prospect, the less is the Inducement to act upon it. But,

(2.) Moral Actions do depend still more upon the Acknowledgment of Principles, remote from Sense, and superior to Chance: And our Obligation to perform such Actions, must be founded upon the Belief of an intelligent Legislator, who is also an Inspector of our Behaviour. For let Virtue be defin'd after what Manner you please, call it *the Love of Order*, Harmony, or Proportion of Mind; let it be a living agreeable to the Perfection of Nature, or acting for the Good of the whole human Species; yet still the Question returns, who constituted this Order of Things? who first made this Harmony or Proportion? or who is the Author of this Nature? For he must be the ultimate Legislator; and this Law of Nature, this Rule of Morality, must be his Will, tho' not arbitrary and mutable, but directed by his supreme Reason, whether it be made known to us by the Observation of that natural Order of Things which he has establish'd, and from thence by reasoning we gather the Fitness of every moral Action; or whether it be discover'd to us by Revelation from himself. And if there be not an Opinion, that the supreme Being is conscious of all we do, it is hard to conceive how our Consciences
H 3 should

should be affected with Shame, tho' Men applaud us when we do ill ; or with Pleasure, tho' we incur the Censure of Men when we do well. From whence it will follow, that whatever Opinion sets Men loose from the Restraint of their own Consciences, will make their Justice, and all other moral Virtues respecting their Fellow-Creatures, very precarious ; and, therefore, an avowed Infidelity in the first Principles of Religion, must needs be very destructive of that Morality, which regards our Intercourse with one another. (See *Enquiry concerning Virtue*, Page 57.) And that this is agreeable to the natural Sentiments of Mankind is plain, from hence, that an Oath or Appeal to the Deity has been look'd upon as the strongest Security that one Man could give another ; which Custom could never have obtain'd without an antecedent Opinion, that God is conscious of what we do. Nay, the very offering an Oath for Confirmation, in order to deceive others more securely, is an evident Proof of Men's natural Opinion, that the strongest Obligation to human Virtue, or moral Honesty, is founded in a sincere Belief of the first Principles of Religion. And, that this Opinion is not contrived by cunning Men, and so instilled into others to keep them in awe, I shall prove hereafter.

'Tis a fatal Thing both to Religion and Morality to imagine, that either of them can be perfect without the other. For as we have great Reason to suspect that Man's Profession of Religion, who is deficient in moral Honesty ; so he that declares himself to be under no Restraint of Conscience from the Belief of any invisible Principle, must excuse us, if we doubt his Integrity in all Cases to be depended upon. He that believes the Principles of Religion, has all the other Engagements to Virtue that an Infidel can pretend to ; and also, that which is more binding than all the rest over and above : And what Reason then can I have to be secure

cure of his Virtue or Morality, who owns himself under fewer Obligations to practise it than other Men? Upon these Considerations, therefore, if Morality were limited to our Behaviour towards Men only, even that could not be sufficiently secur'd upon the Principles of Atheism: But those Principles are deficient upon another Account, and that is,

2. Because, if there really be a God that has any Concern for us, a compleat Morality must necessarily have Respect to him, as well as to our Intercourse with one another. This cannot be denied, unless there should be any who think, because God is a Spirit, and invisible, that therefore Men have no Means of shewing him any Honour. Whereas, the Morality of human Actions depend upon the internal Dispositions of the Mind, of which outward Actions are only an external Sign, and that not always certain: But if we are capable of believing any Thing of God, as a supreme Mind governing the World, we are also capable of inwardly owning this, and consequently of giving him an inward Worship in our Minds. We may exercise Faith and Trust in him, Love, Reverence, and Obedience towards him. These are the internal Acts of Religion due to an infinitely powerful, wise, and beneficent Being, who has given us Understanding, and Will, and Powers of acting: In which communicable Attributes an human Mind is related to the divine Being. If, therefore, Morality cannot be compleat without acting suitably to every Relation, in which we stand to any Beings, and especially to rational Beings, that are known to us; the very chief Part of it must be in proper Acts of Piety and Religion to the first Being, from whom we derive our Reason itself. See *Tully de Legibus*, Lib. 2. who, stating the Law of Nature, lays the Foundation of it in that original Society or Relation between God and Man.

And he makes the Acknowledgment of a God

and Providence to be the first Principles which every Member of Society ought to be persuaded of. Which will farther appear from the Consideration of what I shall offer under the next Head; wherein I am to shew,

II. That all Societies of Men that have ever subsisted in any tolerable Order, have professed the Belief of God's Existence, and an Expectation of divine Rewards and Punishments. Now to shew this universally, I shall,

1. Produce the Testimony of some Authors of the best Credit; and then,

2. Shew how agreeable this is to what we find to have been practised in all considerable Nations, of which we have any History.

1. Produce the Testimony of some Authors of the best Credit.

Tully has written several Treatises upon this Subject; and we find, by his Books, that he had diligently examin'd the Opinions of those that were before him, both as to the Nature of God, and the Nature of the human Soul. And he concludes this to have been a Point generally allow'd in all former Times, that no Nation was so barbarous and savage, but that they knew they ought to have some God. [See *De Leg.* l. 1. 18. *Tusc. Disp.* l. 1. cap. 12. 16.]

In his Books *De Natura Deorum*, the Belief of a God and a future State is asserted by the several Sects of Philosophers, in whose Name he speaks. [See *De Nat. Deor.* l. ii. 7. ib. l. 1. 1.]

What he alledges against the Universality of the Belief of God's Existence, is in the Person of *Cotta* the Academic, and is the Sum of whatever has been said upon this Subject ever since. For first, he allows the Being of God, but is not satisfied with the *Epicurean* Manner of proving it from an innate Idea of him: Then he supposes *there may be divers Nations so very brutish, and void of all Humanity, as*

not

not to have any Notion or Suspicion of the Being of a God: Then he mentions particular Persons as Exceptions to this general Opinion, as, *Diagoras*, *Theodorus*, and *Protagoras*, who was banish'd *Athens*, for writing that he was not able to say, whether there were any Gods or no. And from this Usage he supposes, that others were of the same Opinions, but were shy of declaring them, for fear of the like Usage. And farther he imagines, that all sacrilegious and perjured Persons do really not believe any God.

This is the Sum of what he alledges against the Universality of the Belief of God's Existence: And tho' it may have some Force in it against the Notion of the *Epicureans*, who laid the whole Proof, for the Being of God, upon that natural Anticipation, or innate Idea of him, which they supposed every Man had, and not upon any Consideration of the visible Effects of Providence, or any Tradition from the first Parents of Mankind; yet as to what concerns the common Notion of universal Consent, as it was maintain'd by others, it is no Argument against it. For what if a particular Man now and then shall argue against the Existence of God? Or, what if some Clans of monstrously brutish People that are sunk below the rest of Mankind, should not discover any Sign of Religion among them? Is this a sufficient Exception to the Generality of Mankind using their Reason alike in other Matters?

I have been the more particular in taking Notice of the Accounts which we have in the Writings of *Tully* as to this Matter, for a Reason which I shall have Occasion to mention by and by; and shall, therefore, be more brief as to those who lived before him.

Plato makes the general Consent of all Men in the Belief of a God, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State one Argument for the Certainty of the

the Thing. [See *De leg.* l. 10. p. 886.] And that *Socrates* used to argue from the same Topic, appears not only from *Plato's* Doctrine, which he received from him, but also from that Discourse which *Xenophon* tells us he heard from *Socrates's* own Mouth, in a Conversation with one *Aristodemus*. [*Xenop. ἀπομν.* Lib. 1. Cap. 4.] *Aristotle*, and the Author of the Book *De Mundo*, affirm the same. And, to mention no more, *Maximus Tyrius*, in his Discourse of *What the Nature of God is*, according to *Plato*, says, in so great Strife, Confusion, and Disagreement of Opinions, you may observe one Law, or Discourse, wherein all agree, all the World over, viz. That there is one God, the King and Father of all, &c. Thus much for the Testimony.

2. Let it be consider'd, how agreeable this is to what we find to have been practis'd in all considerable Nations, of which we have any good History. There never was any civiliz'd People, where there was not always some Form or other of religious Worship. As to the particular Kinds of Idolatry which prevail'd in several Nations, there may perhaps, be some Account given how and by whom they were introduced. But there is no Ground to assert, that there was a Time when such a People had no Religion among them. *Orpheus* is supposed by some to have first brought Religion into *Greece* out of *Egypt*: But this was only a new Kind of Idolatry they were unacquainted with. But *Plato* says, that the first Inhabitants of *Greece* did worship the Sun, Moon, Earth, Stars, and Heaven, and they call'd them θεοὶ from θεῖν, because of their swift Motion: And tho' this be somewhat different, yet, if we make Allowance for Time, it is not inconsistent with what *Herodotus* tells us, that the antient *Pelasgi*, who were the first Inhabitants of *Greece*, sacrificed all Kinds of Things, and made Prayers to their Gods; but that they had no particular Names for them, only they called

called them in general θεοί, from τῶν τι, or εἶναι, because they kept every Thing in order. But that long after this they learned out of *Egypt* the Names of other Gods. As to a general Belief of a future State, that early Custom of deifying excellent Men, is a convincing Proof of it. There are, indeed, those who call the Immortality of the Soul an Invention of the *Egyptians*, and make *Herodotus* their Voucher for it; and from thence would infer, that other Nations knew nothing of it, till Travellers brought it from thence.

Now if the *Egyptians* had been so much older than all the rest of Mankind, as they pretend, then this Opinion might well have been first among them, because we suppose it to have been as old as Mankind, but otherwise they had it not before others, nor were the Inventors of it: Nor do the Words of *Herodotus* imply so much. He only says, that the *Egyptians* believed the Transmigration of the Soul. [*Euterp. Cap. 131.*]

Now let the *Egyptians* have the Credit of this Invention, and let *Pythagoras* bring this Doctrine into *Greece*, yet the Belief of a future State was both in *Greece* and other Countries before his Time. *Homer*, who lived some Ages before him, supposes it to have been a well known Opinion in all Countries. And *Herodotus* also tells us, that the *Getæ* believed the Soul's Immortality, and said, when they died, they went to the God *Zamolxis*, whom some of the *Greeks* out of Vanity would make to have been a Servant to *Pythagoras*, and from him to have carried this Opinion among the *Thracians*. But this *Herodotus* tells us he did not believe, because he thought this *Zamolxis*, whoever he was, Man or Dæmon, lived long before *Pythagoras*. The *Greeks* were very vain, as well as the *Egyptians*, and so would pretend to the Honour of discovering every Thing that came into Credit; but they were not the Discoverers of these Opinions.

Well,

Well, but some will have it, that the Belief of a Providence and a future State belonged only to the Vulgar, and that no Philosophers believed them. And the Author of *the Discourse of Free-thinking* asserts, that *Solomon* himself denied the Immortality of the Soul, and argued for the Eternity of the World, and against a future State, in the Book of *Ecclesiastes*; and he pretends to vindicate his Want of knowing this important Point, by observing, "That the Immortality of the Soul was no where plain in the *Old Testament*, was denied by the *Sadducees*, the most philosophical Part of the *Jewish Nation*, was thought doubtful by most Sects of the *Grecian Philosophers*, and denied by the *Stoicks*, had never, according to *Cicero*, been asserted in Writing by any Greek Author extant in his Time, before *Pherecydes*, and was first taught by the *Egyptians*; no Wonder, therefore, if *Solomon* reason'd like other learn'd Men."

As to the *Old Testament*, it may be proved, that the Patriarchs believed a future State, and acted upon that Belief. As for the *Egyptian* Invention, I have mention'd it already. As for the *Sadducees*, there were none of them in *Solomon's* Time. Nor have we any Account extant of any learned Philosophers in the neighbouring Nations, except what are mention'd, in holy Writ, as far inferior to *Solomon* in Wisdom. If there were any Men of Learning among the *Greeks*, their Writings are lost, and their Opinion unknown. For *Solomon* is at least as old as *Homer*, and he was certainly acquainted with the Doctrine of a future State, tho' he did not speak of it in a philosophical Manner, or argue for it from the Nature of the Soul, as *Thales* afterwards did. But the Truth is, the great Design of *Solomon* in that Book, is, to establish the Certainty of a future Judgment. See Chap. xii. 13, 14. And if this Author could either ignorantly or wilfully give so gross a Misrepresentation of what every *English Reader*

Reader may so easily discover him in, we ought not to be surprized, if he has strangely perverted the Sense of other Writers.

As to the Opinion of Philosophers, which he would persuade us to have been against a future State, *Tully* has, in divers Places of his Writings, told us, that the antientest and wisest of them did hold the Immortality of the Soul; and that the contrary was but a novel Opinion among them. [See *Cic. in Lælio.*] And towards the End of his *De Senectute*, he calls those that reason'd otherwise *minuti Philosophi*, *petty Philosophers*. And where he delivers his own Opinion, he gives plain Declarations of his Belief of it.

And if the general Current of the ancient Philosophers had not greatly favour'd the Doctrine of a future State, as it would be very unlikely that so judicious a Writer, as *Tully*, should condemn the contrary for a novel Opinion, so it would have been foolish in the Followers of *Epicurus* to have magnified their Master so much, for being the Inventor of a new Doctrine, because he asserted and pretended to have found out, upon philosophical Principles, the Immortality of the Soul.

It cannot, indeed, be denied, that the ancient Philosophers had very different Opinions about the Nature and Seat of the Soul, and likewise about the Extent of its Duration. Neither need it be denied, that some of their Opinions were such, as being strictly pursued thro' all their Consequences, would be different from, and even inconsistent with that Immortality, which the Revelation of the Gospel has made known to us. For as the primitive Doctrine concerning either the Nature of God, or the Soul of Man, grew more and more corrupted, so those growing Corruptions did much obscure the Reasonings even of those of the best Understanding, and rendred them liable to Uncertainty, when they came to particular Explications,

ons, of what they were in general persuaded of from Tradition.

They did not sufficiently distinguish between the Nature of Soul and Body. And, from hence, some, who held the Soul's Immortality, yet are said to have thought it a finer Sort of Matter. And the Opinions of others concerning the Seat of the Soul in the Body, have been sometimes mistaken for their Opinion of its Nature, or Substance. However, if we consult the Remains of the most eminent Philosophers among the Antients, we may see that a Providence and a future State, was what the wisest and most virtuous of them always held, and without which they could not tell how to solve the Appearances either of the natural or moral World. And,

III. This Belief or universal Consent did not arise from any Art or Contrivance, or Compact of Men, in order to keep one another in Awe, but was really antecedent to it, and built upon a more universal Principle; which I will shew,

1. By considering it in the Way of Fact, whereby it will appear to be without any Ground in Point of History.

2. By shewing, in the Way of Reason and Argument, the Absurdity of such a Supposition.

1. By considering it in the Way of Fact.

They that pretend to give an Account, how the Generality of Mankind came to be possess'd with so remarkable an Opinion, as that of the Being of a God all at once, if it had no antecedent Foundation in Nature, ought to assign some Time or Place for so extraordinary an Event; for so great a Revolution could not easily be forgotten. It is, indeed, supposed to have been brought about before there was any Learning, or History, when the People were easily to be impos'd upon by their Governors; but then these Governors must have been Men of

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extraordinary Parts to bring such a wonderful Thing to pass; and there must have been such a prodigious Disproportion between the Capacities of the Governors and their People, as has been never known since. But not to insist upon such Scruples, let us consider what Pretence they have from Antiquity, for supposing such a Fact; and tho' they cannot assign the exact Time, yet they ought to pitch upon some Time antecedent to it, or else they ought not to blame us for thinking it to be as old as Mankind.

It would, indeed, be unreasonable to expect, that they should bring us any authentic written History, of a Time which must be supposed to have been before Writing was invented; but there ought to have been some traditional Relations of it preserved. But there is none; and the further we go back into Antiquity, the stronger the Tradition runs against this Suggestion. We may, indeed, trace particular Kinds of Idolatry to their first Original; but to a Time when Men believed no God at all, we cannot come: We may go back to the Deification of imaginary Deities, but the higher we go, the nearer we shall come to the original Notion of the true God.

And to this Purpose *Aristotle* observes concerning this very Kind of ancient Tradition. *That there are these Gods, and that the Deity contains all Nature, are Notions that have been deliver'd down by primitive and ancient Men, and left to Posterity wrapped up in the Dress of Fable; but that other Things have been fabulously added, to persuade the Multitude, and for the Benefit of Law and publick Utility. For, thus, say they, that these Gods are of human Shape, and are like some other Animals, and divers other Things consequent upon these Opinions, or agreeable to them; from which if a Man should separate, and take only that which was first or original, namely, That they thought Gods were the first Beings, he might well think it divinely spoken, and*
that,

that, perhaps, every Art or Science, being often found out, as far as possible, and lost again, these their Opinions have been preserved as reliques to this Time. The Opinion then of our Fore-fathers, and that which comes from the first Men, is only so far evident.

We see he makes a Difference between the Truth of Things deliver'd, and that fabulous Dress in which it was convey'd down to Posterity ; and, likewise, puts a Distinction between the true original Belief of a Deity, and those Conceits which were superadded to it by human Invention. He had asserted a first eternal active Principle as the efficient Cause of all Things, and by considering the Nature of *Mind*, and of a first Mover and Cause of Motion, concludes, that *God is the most excellent eternal Being, so that Life, and continual eternal Existence, belongs to God ; for this is the Notion of God.* And it is to this one first Mover, who is himself immoveable, and indivisible, and unchangeable, the first Being, and Cause of all Things ; that he applies the Meaning of the true original Tradition before mention'd.

For certain, therefore, he did not believe that the Acknowledgment of the Being of one supreme God was any human Invention.

What Opinion *Plato* had before him, of this Matter, is evident from the whole Tenor of his Writings ; the great Design of which is to establish the first Principles of Religion and Morality, the Being and Providence of God, the natural and eternal Distinction of Good and Evil, the Immortality of the Soul, and a State of future Rewards and Punishments ; and he observes how much happier the first Ages were, and much more innocent and virtuous, when the firm Persuasion of these Principles of Religion did more universally prevail among them. [See *Plato de Leg. lib. 12. p. 948.*] And this shews how far this Philosopher

sopher was from Thinking, that, in Fact, there had been ever formerly a Time, when Men were without all Sense of Religion.

And, on the contrary, how much stronger and clearer he thought the Sense of Religion to have been in former Ages. For he supposes that the first Men came from God, and knew their own Original, and therefore tells us, in Respect to this primitive Tradition, *That we ought to give Credit to those who were, as they said, the first Offspring of the Gods, since they surely knew their own Progenitors. It is therefore impossible to disbelieve the Children of the Gods, tho' they do not speak in the Way of strict Demonstration; but according to general Law or Custom, we ought to believe them, as professing to declare only those Things which peculiarly belonged to themselves, and with what they were particularly acquainted.*

It may, indeed, be objected to this Passage, that *Plato* applies it to the vulgarly received Gods of his Time, according to the fabulous Genealogies of them, for which he allows he has nothing but Tradition. And therefore he uses this only to screen himself from Harm, and did not really believe such Gods. Now admitting that he applies this Argument of Tradition to a wrong Object in this Instance; yet from the Use he makes of it to lead Men to the first Creator of all Things, whom he immediately after brings in, giving Instructions to these created Deities. It is evident that he thought the original Belief of Mankind came gradually, by some Means or other, from the Father and Maker of all Things.

For it is to be observed, that he makes two Sorts of created Gods; the one in Compliance with the then prevailing Theology, which took the Heaven and the Earth, the Sun and Stars, for visible Gods, as supposing them to be animated; the other Sort, was of those, *δαίμονες*, which

which were not visible, but could, when they pleased, make themselves known to us, whose Generation we can give no Account of, but ought to believe the most ancient Tradition which came from themselves.

Now if we do but allow, that by these *created Gods*, who were *invisible*, but had a Power of manifesting themselves as they pleased, *Plato* meant what we call *Angels*, we have a further Glimpse of original Truth shining thro' this dark Tradition, and conveying to us not only the Notion of the one God, but of these his Ministers.

The first Men of Letters, of whom we have any Account in *Heathen* Antiquity, were called *Theologers*, that is, Poets, or others, who treated of Matters relating to the Gods, and who sometimes gave an Account of the Original of all Things in a religious Way, upon the Ground of antient traditionary Doctrine: Which being by Degrees corrupted according to the Poets Fancy, it came to pass in Time, that these Fables being set off in a pleasing Manner by the Poets, became the Occasion of such infinite Error, that Truth was almost quite lost.

Some Men therefore began to offer at giving an Account of the Original of Things in a *Physiological* Way. But the Uncertainty of *Physiological* Speculations made *Socrates* turn his Thoughts to moral and practical Philosophy, and this he saw could not subsist without a firm Belief of a God, a Providence, and a future State; and without these Principles he knew there was no proceeding to any Satisfaction, either in the *Theological* and *Physiological* Way. Upon this Foundation *Plato*, who was his Scholar, built his Philosophy, and was curious to search into all the Traditions of former Times, and to consider what ancient Truths were hid under the Disguise of poetical Theology, as well as the Opinions of those who sought to find it in the Way of Reason and Philosophy. And he could not, in either of these Ways, find
any

any Ground for Suspicion, that the Principles of Religion were a Cheat.

Anaxagoras also, who was before *Plato*, asserted, that not *Chance* or *Necessity*, but an eternal Mind, produced and order'd all Things.

Thales, who is called by *Aristotle*, the Prince or Founder of Natural Philosophy, and is generally reckon'd the first in Order of the *Ionic* Class before him affirm'd, that God was that eternal Mind which form'd all Things. That, he knew not only the Actions, but the Thoughts of Men. And this Opinion of the Immortality of the Soul was first maintain'd among the *Greeks*, by him, upon Philosophical Principles. And in this Sense *Pherecydes* is also said to have been the first of whom we have any written Account, that said the Souls of Men were eternal. And in this Sense *Tully* takes it, for he says, that there were, as he believes, many others of the same Opinion before *Pherecydes*. But their written Memoirs in the Philosophical Way, it seems, went no higher than his Age. I need not mention the Opinion of *Pythagoras*, who was the Head of the *Italic* Order of Philosophers, for his Doctrine is sufficiently known.

Thus we see that the first Philosophers among the *Greeks* had no Suspicion that the Principles, upon which Religion itself was founded, had been an human Invention; much less can they be suspected of coming in for any Share of the Invention. Since some of them immediately after *Thales*, as *Anaximander*, *Democritus*, and *Leucippus*, were the first that attempted to sow the Seeds of Atheism in their Physiology, which yet did not grow up till some Time after into such a tolerable System, as to give Men of Sense any Satisfaction, without admitting an intelligent Principle which they would fain have avoided.

As to the Surmises about the Original of Religion in *Egypt*, as if the first Principles of it had
I 2 been

been invented there; what I have said before is sufficient to shew the Unreasonableness of them.

And, indeed, such Surmises had never been thought of, if there had been any Probability of finding another Time when Religion did first begin, besides the first Beginning of Mankind. But the *Egyptians* pretending to such Antiquity above other Nations, might safely claim the Invention of every Thing; and admitting their Chronology, no Body could disprove them.

Upon the Whole therefore we may conclude, That this Belief did not arise from any Contrivance of Men, but was built upon a more universal Principle. [*Cic. Tusc. lib. 1. c. 13.*]

2. I will shew briefly the Absurdity of such a Supposition in the Way of Reason and Argument; to which Purpose let it be consider'd,

1. That in order to favour such a Suspicion, we must likewise suppose, that this Project was begun either when Men were under one Government, or when they lived so near together, that all seeing the common Advantage of it, took Care to come into the Design, and transmit it to future Generations. Now this Supposition will naturally lead Men to think the scriptural Account of all Mankind coming from one common Parent may be probable: And this will quite ruin the *Hypothesis* of those who think the Earth has been inhabited from Eternity, and as for those who allow the World had a Beginning, they must put this great supposed Change of Mens Opinions about it so very near that Beginning, as to leave no Means of Discovery, whether there was any such Change or no; unless they could prove it impossible, that the first Men should have any Notion of God at all; which can never be done, except they can first prove the Being of God, and his discovering himself to Mankind impossible. Now 'tis very absurd to make a Supposition which
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can never be granted, till we have first granted that which is designed to be prov'd by it.

2. Let it be consider'd, that it is much more difficult to plant a new Principle in a whole People, than it is to make a political Use of a general Persuasion that prevails among them. The latter may be done with Ease, but the former not without great Opposition. And, besides, to enable the most powerful Monarch to bring about such a Design, he must have many Men that do really believe what he designs to establish; and then the Supposition, that all the Truth of Religion depends upon such Establishment, is destroy'd, or else he must have a Number of Men that act against their certain Knowledge, which is still a great Absurdity. And as for this Monarch himself, he must either believe what he is about introducing, and then we are to seek for an higher Original of it, or he must not have believed it, and then how came he to venture upon such an Expedient? But to this it is answer'd, *That there are naturally in Mankind some Seeds of Religion*; such as a Desire of knowing the Causes of all Things, join'd with an Ignorance of those Causes; an Anxiety about Things future, arising from the like Ignorance of Nature; and, therefore, a suspecting of some invisible Power, and a Desire to prevent future Evils. And, from hence they conclude, that cunning Men taking the Advantage of this general Ignorance and Fear, might, with Ease, cultivate these Seeds of Religion into settled Principles. But now, how plausible soever this might seem, yet it greatly fails in the very first Principle, in supposing a natural Fear in all Men, without any natural Foundation, and yet a natural Desire of knowing the Cause of that Fear. It seems allow'd, that natural Reason teaches Men to enquire for a Cause of every Thing, till they come to the first Cause. And, it is granted, by

these Men, that all Men have always had a Fear of some invisible Being. [*Leviath. Lib. I. Cap. 12.*] And that they were ready to close with the Opinion of those, who first told them, that the prime Object of this Fear was God, the first Cause of all Things: This infers, that the Fear of a Deity is very natural, and, in some Degree, coeval with the first Constitution of Things. For what Reason then should the Truth of that Cause be rejected, which gives the best Account of this universal Effect? But why do these Men insist so much upon Fear? Have not Men Hopes as well as Fears? Are not those Attributes which are the Foundation of Hope, as essential to the Notion of a Deity, as those which create Fear? It may be they were unwilling to mention Hope, because this would be a Balance for Fear, and spoil this Hypothesis; or rather, that their Design is to represent those Attributes of the Deity, which should make ill Men as unwilling as possible to believe his Being: However, I cannot but observe, that atheistical Men, in owning this universal Fearfulness of Mankind, do, in Effect, give Judgment against themselves, and discover, that they are forced to entertain some Apprehension of a Deity, whether they will or no. For, no Doubt, Men of this Temper would always have made Opposition to the introducing such a Belief among Men, as would certainly give themselves Uneasiness, if there had not been such a Foundation in Nature for it, as they could not wholly destroy. It might also be observed, that if the Principles of Religion had been first introduced into the World merely by State Policy, the Politicians and Governors of the World, as knowing the Cheat, would have been less subject to those Anxieties of Conscience, which the despising those Principles creates; whereas, we find in all Ages, the greatest of Men, who have nothing to fear from human Power, have been as much afraid, by the secret Terrors of Religion,

gion, as the meanest Mortals; which shews their natural Apprehension of a Power and Justice superior to them, even tho' they are unwilling to confess it.

But, to conclude, the Manner in which the Christian Religion was first planted in the World, is an evident Demonstration against this Supposition of Policy. For it prevail'd against all the Opposition of human Power; and, it seems, as if God, by taking this Method of propagating the Christian Doctrine, had design'd for ever to silence this Objection against those first Principles of Religion, upon which the Christian is built. I proceed now,

IV. To consider upon what Foundation this general Belief or Persuasion is built.

Now there are three Ways to account for this Universality of Belief.

1. This general Concurrence in the Acknowledgment of a Deity, may proceed from one common Instruction, convey'd down from one to another from the very Beginning of Mankind. Or,

2. It may arise from the very Make of every Man's Mind, disposing him clearly to apprehend the Truth and Certainty of it, upon the first proposing. Or,

3. It may be discover'd, by the common Principles of Reason, from what is obvious to the Sense and Experience of every considerate Man, who will but attend to those Effects of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which daily present themselves to him.

1. If we suppose, this general Concurrence, in the Acknowledgment of a Deity, to have proceeded from some common Instruction or Institution at first, and so to have been convey'd down from one Age to another by Tradition: This will make it highly credible, that Mankind, at first, sprung from one common Stock; and that the

very first Men must have been some Way or other instructed in it. And who can so reasonably be supposed to be their Instructor, as their Maker, who might, by some Discovery of himself to them, shew them, that they ow'd their Being to him? This is not unreasonable to suppose; or even supposing them as wise as we now are, they could not easily be ignorant, or unconcern'd about their own Original, it being the most natural Enquiry, that Men newly come into Being can be supposed to make. Nor is it likely, that they should impute their Being to a false Cause, when the true one was so very near them, they being but the very first Remove from it. And when they saw their own Offspring, they would, no doubt, be careful to tell them the same Truth: For it is not conceivable, that the first Parents of Mankind should go about to put a cheat upon all their Posterity, concerning their own Original. And this gives a reasonable Account, how this general Persuasion of the Being of God might be propagated thro' all Generations and Countries: And that it really was so, there are divers very considerable Arguments to persuade us, which, when impartially compared together, will abundantly satisfy any unprejudiced Man. And,

1. It is observable, that before the arising of the several Sects of Philosophers, it was a general Tradition, that the World was made by God. This is evident from all the antient Poets that are extant, who have said any thing about the Original of Things. And it is no Doubt, but that the first Poets and Philosophers too, set up upon the Stock of Tradition, though, as the World grew older, they found different Ways of embellishing, and by that means of gradually corrupting the antient Doctrine; but yet some Lines of the primitive Truth was preserv'd under all these Disguises. *Aristotle* owns, that all the Antients believed the
World

World was made, tho' they differ'd about its Production. And, indeed, when they began to philosophize about it, they were greatly divided in their Opinions. But still the most considerate among them saw a Necessity of admitting an infinite Mind for the first active Cause of all Things.

2. As to the Manner in which the World was produced, there are some Reliques of old Tradition scatter'd up and down antiently in most Countries, tho' dressed up in the Guise of Fable and Allegory, suitable to the Genius of particular Times or Nations.

3. That Mankind sprung all originally from one common Stock, was an Opinion generally received; and that Man was made by God, and in his Image, are Notions which frequently occur as a common Doctrine in antient Authors.

4. This is farther confirm'd by the general Practice of almost all Nations, by deducing their first Original from some, to whom they gave special Honour. For it being a current Tradition among them all, that Mankind was from God; and they themselves being, by Length of Time, and Want of Letters, become ignorant of the Manner and Circumstances of their own first planting in such a particular Country, were apt to fancy something like the Original of Mankind to belong particularly to themselves, and to ascribe it to some particular God, after that Kind of Idolatry had taken Place in the World.

5. It is evident, that as all Men generally believed one supreme God, so they were persuaded, that under him were other Degrees of Beings, to which they gave the Name of Gods, who were under the Government of the supreme God. [See *Arist. Polit. Lib. I. Cap. 1. in fine.*] That these inferior Beings were made by the supreme God, and that he sent them frequently to appear to, and converse with Men: And that God communicated his

Will

Will to them, and they did from him frequently communicate the Knowledge of future Events to Men. And 'tis hardly conceivable how such Opinions should so universally possess Mankind, if the Ground of them had not been evidently shewn to the first Men, and so from them derived down by Tradition.

6. That Mankind was originally in a more innocent, and more happy State than now it is: And that the Souls of Men were immortal: That good Men shall be happy, and wicked Men miserable; That all Mankind, excepting a few, were destroyed by a Flood, for their great Wickedness; and that the Earth shall at last be destroy'd by a Conflagration, may well be ascribed to the same Cause, rather than to any Reasonings of Men.

7. The Offering of Sacrifices, both propitiatory and eucharistical; the Offering of first Fruits and Tithes; the Setting apart of particular Persons to minister to God; the appointing of Festivals, making of Vows, invoking the Deity in solemn Oaths or Appeals, and consulting him by Oracles.

These and divers other general Usages do plainly imply, that there was at first some one common Original from whence they were derived. And tho' long Tract of Time, and transplanting into divers Countries, and many other Reasons, must needs have greatly alter'd, and corrupted the first Institution, or most primitive Doctrine of Religion, and the Worship of God; yet there were still such visible Remains of it scatter'd up and down in every Nation, as being compar'd with one another, would evidently discover, that they all at first sprung from one common Root, and were instructed by one common Master.

This Matter might be in some Measure confirm'd by divers Usages and Opinions which have generally obtain'd in the World, and yet have either but very little or no Foundation in Nature, besides uni-

versal

verfal Practice or tacit Agreement to follow what was once begun. Of this Kind is the counting by Decades; the general Agreement in the antient Number and Order, and near upon in the fame Names of Letters; the Composition of Days into Weeks, of which the Reason, fetch'd from the seven Planets, seems to be an Invention of Idolatry long after the Thing itself was settled in Practice, but the true Reason of it lost; some Circumstances relating to Marriage and Affinity and Funerals: And to mention no more, the Preference given to the Right Hand above the Left, which, as there can be no satisfactory Reason given for it, besides the Usage of the first Men, so there being neither Interest, nor Convenience to induce Men to change it, I make no Question, but it will always continue. I proceed now to mention,

2. The second Way by which this universal Belief of the first Principles of Religion, and more especially of the Being of God, may, in some measure, arise, and that is from the natural Make of Man's Mind, disposing him clearly to apprehend the Truth and Certainty of it upon the first proposing.

There are some Truths so very obvious to the Mind of Man, upon his first turning his Thoughts towards them, that he cannot, without Violence to his own Mind, refuse his Assent to them. Of which Sort is the Notion of a God, which Man is naturally disposed to receive, as soon as it is proposed to his Understanding.

There are two Things, I know, which are objected against this Notion of God's Existence being so evident to the Mind of Man; the one is, that there are some Nations of the World, which have no Notion of God or Religion at all: And the other is, the great Wickedness of so many Men, who live so contrary to all Sense of God, that they cannot be conceived to have any natural Persuasion of his Being. But neither of these Objections are of any Moment. For,

1. If

1. If we should grant, if there are some Clans of Men, as the *Hottentots* for Instance, and several People in different Corners of *America*, who are so far sunk into Brutality, that there appears little or no Notion of a God among them; how will this prove, that the Notion of a God is not natural to a reasonable Mind? But there is no Occasion to grant this; for those who have lived upon the Spot with these People, affirm, that they do pray to a Being that dwells above, and offer Sacrifice of Milk and the best Things they have; and that most of those *Americans* believe also a future State, in which the Conditions of good and bad Men will be very different. [See *Origines Sacrae*, in the new Part, Book I. Chap. 1. Page 73. *Ovington's Voyage to Surat*.]

2. As to the Wickedness of Men in all Countries, who live in Contradiction to any certain Belief of a God, which is urged as an Argument, that the Notion of him is not so natural, as is pretended; I think it may be replied, that Mens thus holding the Truth in Unrighteousness, is rather an Evidence, that some Notion of that Truth is natural. For if they whose Practice makes it their Interest, that there should be no God, can yet seldom be able to bring themselves to hold out in denying him, 'tis a Sign that the Notion is so natural, that they cannot get rid of it, let them do what they can to prevent it; insomuch that they find out the most absurd Ways of corrupting the natural Notion of God by Superstition, because they cannot quite discard it. I proceed now to the

3. Third Ground of this universal Persuasion of the Being of God, viz. the common Principle of Reason deducing this from the Observation of those visible Effects of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which are obvious to every considerate Man, who will but attend to them.

This Argument drawn from the visible Works of

of the Creation, for a Proof of the Being of a God and a Providence, the Heathens themselves thought so convincing, that a Man of Sense could not contradict. [See *Cicer. de Nat. Deor. Lib. II. Cap. 35, 37, 38.*] And,

1. If we consider the amazing Magnitude of the whole Creation, it gives us a Notion of Power incomprehensible, in the Production and Preservation of it.

2. If we consider the prodigious Number and Variety of Creatures contain'd in this immense Space, it shews a Wisdom and Contrivance equal to that infinite Power which produced them. If we only view this Earth, which is but a Point in Comparison with the Universe, what amazing Variety does it afford us? Under the Earth how many Stones, Minerals, and Metals? Upon the Surface, what an incredible Number of Vegetables? Upon the Earth, in the Water, and in the Air, how many thousand Sorts of Animals? And, if we consider, that the Planets, which roll about the fixed Stars, may be replenish'd with both animate and inanimate Creatures, what an astonishing Multiplication of their Numbers and Variety will this then amount to? But,

3. On the other Hand, if we pry into the exquisite Minuteness of the several Parts, of which each Creature, either animate or inanimate, is composed, this will still heighten our Admiration of the infinite Skill of the Artificer, who fram'd them. There are Millions of perfect Animals which cannot be discern'd by the naked Eye, which yet, by the Help of Microscopes, are discover'd to have their several Parts as curiously framed, as those of a much larger Size: And how surprizingly small must those Parts be, singly taken, when a compound Body is hardly visible? And the like may be said of Plants; and even the less compounded Bodies, of how infinitely small Particles do they consist?

list? Who can discern the Texture of the Parts of Water, or the Particles of Air or Wind? So that the *Minima Naturæ* are as much beyond our Capacities to discover, as the Magnitude of the Universe. What an infinite Wisdom then must it be, which at once so intimately reaches, and so accurately manages both these Extremes? For,

4. If we consider the Beauty, Order, and Regularity of every distinct Species of Things; the Accuracy of the divine Artificer will still farther appear. Tho' the Number of his Works be so incomprehensibly great, yet each of them singly is directed and finished with as much Skill as if it were the only Thing attended to, and beyond the most skilful Artist to imitate. [See *Wilkins of Nat. Rel.* B. I. Chap. 6.] Nor is the Order, Regularity, and Proportion, constantly observed in the visible Creation, less to be admir'd, than the Beauty and Elegance of each of them. That so many Degrees of Creatures, animate and inanimate, should be always kept in their proper Rank, so that they appear to be the same thro' all Generations, is utterly repugnant to the Nature of Chance, and must argue a wise Director.

5. The harmonious Correspondence of each Part of Nature to other, shews a comprehensive Wisdom, that has one entire View of all Things at once, such a Skill as has no Occasion to mend or new model any one Part of its Work, but makes both small and great Parts answer one another so exactly, that notwithstanding all the multifarious Motions and Directions of Motion in the World, there is no Disorder created thereby in the Whole; and tho' we cannot discover all the Uses, for which every particular Part of the Creation was made, or to which it serves, yet from what we can discover, we may reasonably conclude, that every Part has its Use in the Whole, and that every Thing is wisely suited to some excellent Purpose.

But

But then, that there is a Goodness, as well as Wisdom and Power, shewn in the Formation of all Things, does more evidently appear from the animal and rational Part of the World, which rejoice in, and are well pleased with their Being. And, therefore,

6. If we contemplate the curious Structure of so many Species of Animals, and observe how exactly they are all fitted in their very outward Frame, as well as inward Dispositions and Instincts to their several respective States and Conditions of Life; and what suitable Provision is made for their Satisfaction, as well as for the Preservation, Continuance, and Propagation of their several Kinds, we cannot easily forbear to admire the Bounty as well as Wisdom of Providence appearing therein. Such for Instance is the Distinction of Sexes in all Animals, and the due Proportion of the Numbers of each Sex to the other. This quite destroys all Supposition of spontaneous or equivocal Generation, even in lesser Animals, and shews the Absurdity of imagining any real Animal, and especially Mankind, could ever be produced by Chance, or a casual Motion and Concourse of Atoms of which they consist.

But not to insist upon the exquisite Formation of all the internal as well as external Parts of each Animal; how is it possible, if they had sprung out of the Earth like Mushrooms, that so nice a Proportion of Sexes should be kept in their first Production; and that they should by natural Instinct know that they were mutually design'd for each other; and that the succeeding Generations were to be produced in a Way so very different from the first? Such, again, is the mighty Care which Animals have of their Young, till they are able to shift for themselves: The different Instincts of various Creatures, and yet in all of the same Species, constantly the same; each Animal knowing its proper Food,

Food, and shunning what is improper: The natural Sense which every Creature has of its own proper Weapon of Defence, and the Way of using it without teaching: The wonderful Sagacity and Diligence of some Creatures: The admirable Art, even of very small Animals, in forming their own Places of Habitation or Security: These Things shew that tho' they do not direct themselves, yet they are directed by a constant and unerring Wisdom. Again, if we consider the convenient Structure of the several Parts of the different Kinds of Creatures, as Beasts, Birds, and Fishes, how they are fitted to their several Elements, and Ways of living in them: This is an Instance of Wisdom constantly suiting proper Means to their respective Ends.

I might take Notice of the exquisite Formation of the several Organs of Sensation; how wonderfully they are adapted in every Creature, to their Business and Manner of Life; and how they are guarded against any Hurt; but the whole Animal Oeconomy is so apparently the Work of Wisdom, that hardly any one, who has been well acquainted with it, tho' in other Respects not very forward in owning any Sentiments of Religion, but has yet, by the irresistible Evidence of the Thing, been brought to confess wise Contrivance in it, as *Aristotle*, *Pliny*, and *Galen*, and others, among the Ancients, and divers others of later Times.

Now as curious as all this Animal Structure is, and as capable as it is of receiving grateful Sensations, so there is a like Variety of Provision made in Nature, to satisfy every one of them in a Way suitable to its Capacity. Even all the Senses of Animals have Provision made for their grateful Entertainment; for the Eye is provided an infinite Variety of Colours, Figures, Leaves, Flowers, and Fruits, of great Beauty and Delight to be seen, and Light, and a pleasant Medium, to see them by. And to Man the heavenly Bodies afford a very entertaining Prospect.

Prospect. And so for all the other Senses, to some or other of which, almost every Thing is contrived to minister something of Delight. And on the contrary, there are no more ungrateful Things to any one of them than may serve on Purpose to set off those that are grateful to more Advantage.

7. Lastly, If we consider Man, the principal Inhabitant of this lower World, our Notions of these Attributes of God must needs be more strongly impressed upon us; and whatever has been hinted at either of the curious Structure of the Bodies of other Animals, or of the Provision made to preserve and support them, or to please and gratify their natural Sensations, is yet more eminently to be observed in Man, for whose Use all other Things in some Measure are made.

That Complaint, that Man is not so immediately provided with Food and Clothing of his own, as other Creatures, is both ungrateful and absurd. 'Tis indeed true, that Man, without his own Industry, is not so provided with Food and Clothing as other Creatures are; but then Providence has given him Reason to supply himself as he likes best; and Ability to make a more ample Use of all Things than the rest of the Creatures can.

But I intend not so much to consider Man, in respect of his bodily Conveniences, and that outward Condition, whereby he is related to the material World; as in respect of his Mind and Reason, whereby he is made capable of judging about the rest of the Creation, and of reflecting upon himself and Actions, and considering what his own Nature is in its best Capacity, and whether there be any Powers above him, to which he likewise may be related.

However, it will not be improper to take Notice of two or three Observations, which arise from that Rank or Order, which Man bears in the World in respect of other Creatures.

1. That there are different Degrees of Perfection in the several Ranks of Creatures one above another, till we come to Mankind; from whence Men have concluded, that there is something more excellent in Men than in them. [*Aristot. Polit. lib. 1. cap. 8.*]

2. It is observed, that there is something in the very outward Structure of Man, which very remarkably distinguishes him from the other Creatures below him; and which, in the Apprehension of some Persons of great Judgment, denotes his being chiefly design'd for the Exercise of his Reason and Understanding; towards which, his erect Posture of Body gives him a particular Advantage. [*See Aristot. de partibus Animal. lib. 4. cap. 10. Cic. de N. D. lib. 2. cap. 56. Ovid. Xenophon. Ἀπομνημ. lib. 1. cap. 4. §. 11.*]

3. It may farther be observed, that of all visible Creatures, Mankind alone has the Benefit of Speech, and it is evidently design'd for the Communication of Reason, and Thought from one Man to another, and so has a plain Reference to an higher Principle within, which is entirely distinct from mere Animal Life.

From these Observations we may fairly conclude, that the same Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, which is so manifest in the visible World, does likewise extend itself to Things invisible; and that our Souls, and whatever other superior Beings there may be, are not less the Production of some wise, and good, and powerful Being, than our Bodies and the Bodies of Animals; for since there is a gradual Progression from Things inanimate to Things that have vegetative Life, and from thence to Animals, and from them to Man; and since there is in Man an evident Relation of his bodily Fabric, to the Use of something in him which reasons, and reflects, and uses the Body, and shews its own Being by performing visible Effects upon the Body, tho'

tho' itself be invisible: And since all different Ranks of Beings point at something above them, to which they owe a Subjection, in Point of Excellence; it is but reasonable to suppose that Man, which is of this compound Nature, is in respect of this Mind as much related to something above him, as he is, in respect of this Body, related to Creatures below him. And, consequently, whatever Being is the Fountain of all that Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, which we admire in the World, it is a Being much more resembling the Mind of Man than his Body. All material Things cannot think or move themselves. Man has a Power of beginning Action or Motion. But yet conscious, that he could not have always this Power, because not eternal, therefore he perceives that he depends upon some other Cause for his Being.

And, thus, whatever Perfections he has, they were made by a Being much more perfect, because capable of communicating such Perfections as are in Man. And from hence we may reasonably conclude, that the first Cause of all Perfection must necessarily be eternal, that is, could not possibly have any superior or antecedent Cause of its Being.

But since this eternal or self-existent Being is much more resembled by the Soul of Man than by any Thing outward, its Perfections will be better understood, by being compar'd with the correspondent Powers or Perfections in the Mind of Man. Let us therefore consider the human Soul, with respect to those Attributes of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, the Perfection of which we attribute to the supreme Being. And we shall find in Man not meerly the Effects of them, but likewise some Resemblance of the Attributes themselves, or a Capacity in the Mind of Man to exercise them in a limited Degree. Thus, for Instance, the Mind of Man has a Power of beginning Motion, and such as Matter is not capable of, a Power of willing,

chusing and acting freely. I know those Men who are unwilling to allow the Being of any God, but the Universe, or any spiritual Substance, do deny this *Free-will* to be in Man; because they say there is always some Cause or other, which antecedently determines him to chuse and act this Way or that Way; but here they either take for granted, that there is no other Being but Matter, which never acts, but is acted upon; or else they confound a moral Motive with a *Physical* efficient Cause. So that an abstracted Reason inducing, and a bodily Impulse forcing us to this or that, is the same with them; tho' there is nothing more distinct.

2. As to Wisdom in the Mind of Man; we have several Proofs, *viz.* the Power of Sensation, Perception, Reflection, Comparison, Reasoning, and judging of Things past, present, and future; the Power of inventing, contriving, improving; the Quickness of its Thoughts; and the Power of forming abstracted Notions of Things. These and many others, are the Properties of an human Mind, which shew it to be an intelligent Being distinct from Matter; which made some of the *Heathen* Philosophers judge it to be *divine*, or of the same Nature with God himself, and therefore eternal also. [*Cicero. Tusc. lib. 1. cap. 27.*]

3. As to Goodness, tho' the Traces of it are not so visible as we could wish, the true Reason of which Failure is best learned from divine Revelation, yet there are not wanting Marks of that, where ill Custom has not quite destroy'd them. There are hardly any so bad as not inwardly to approve of Justice, Benignity, Gratitude and Sincerity; and to abhor all Acts of Injustice, Cruelty, Ingratitude and Baseness.

We should not call the generous Propension of doing Kindness to others by the *Name* of *Humanity*, if such an Inclination did not originally belong to *human* Nature; nor could all Men condemn Selfish-

fishness in others, if a friendly or *social* Principle were not natural.

And here I cannot but observe, that those Pretenders to Philosophy, whether ancient or modern, who have excluded a wise Providence out of their Scheme, have also given the worst Character that can be of human Nature, making mere Self-enjoyment and Fear the only Principles of human Virtue.

That *Epicurus* made Pleasure the ultimate End of human Happiness; and that Pleasure to arise either from mere bodily Sensations, or from Reflection upon such Sensations, is well known. [See *Cicer. de finibus, lib. 2. cap. 3.*] And as for that other Principle of that same Sect, that *all Kindness and Good-will arises from Weakness*, it has been follow'd by those who make the natural State of Man a State of War. But tho' this may, indeed, be a Representation of these Men's own corrupted Temper, yet Thanks be to God, there are in these very Men, some such natural Propensions to Society as overthrow their Principle, and shew that Man is naturally a *social Animal*. Upon which Account, besides the Consideration of the foremention'd Excellencies, in the Mind of Man, singly taken, by which in some Sort he resembles the supreme Being; we may also observe, how the joint Exercise of them produces many noble and beneficial Effects in the World, such as Building, Planting, Tilling, exercising Trade and Commerce, and making Laws for the more happy living in Society, and exercising a Sort of Care and Providence, not only over their own Species, but even over many brute Creatures also. Now from whence is it, but from an original Sense of Goodness in the Mind of Man, that Men direct their natural Portion of Wisdom and Power to such beneficial Purposes? and that their Consciences reproach them when they act otherwise; tho' such an Action may, for the present, gratify their mere animal Passions? Corporal Im-

pressions alone could never produce such Remorse for acting contrary to Reason; or Satisfaction for acting according to it; but would often produce the contrary, if not hinder'd by Consideration, which is able to correct the present Impulses of Matter upon us: So that Reason and Thought is different from Matter and Motion.

I might farther observe divers other Properties in the Mind of Man, which do tacitly imply our natural Apprehensions of such a supreme Being to whom such Properties belong. Of this Kind is the perpetually growing Desire of all Kinds; the perpetual Enquiry after Happiness; the continual aspiring of the Mind after something higher and nobler than what at present it enjoys; the continual aiming, as it were, towards Immortality; and therefore naturally endeavouring some Way or other to attain it.

It finds in its Nature an utter Abhorrence of not being at all, so that it chuses an imaginary Existence rather than none; endeavouring always, by some Means or other, to survive this Life, if it be but in Fame and the Memory of others.

Thus we have seen that the manifest Instances of inconceivable Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, display'd in the Frame and Preservation of the World; and in some Measure, as it were, exemplified in the Mind of Man, could not proceed from Chance or Necessity, but must argue an intelligent Being, superior to all these Effects, to whom all these Perfections do originally belong.

That thinking Men did thus argue from Effects to a first Cause, and establish their Belief of a God and a Providence, is Matter of Fact. And that they argu'd right cannot be deny'd, but by supposing something that implies a manifest Absurdity, such as, that Things may be without any Cause of their Being. Indeed Men who deny a Providence, would fain make use of the Word *Nature* as a sufficient Solution for every Thing. But this is a Word

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of a very ambiguous and indeterminate Signification. Thus when an intelligent and active Providence antecedent, and superior to Matter and Motion, is excluded, *Nature* can signify nothing but the State in which Things are, without any Consideration of what causes them to be; so that this is only the Name of the Effects, and not of any real Agent. And to this Sense all the Atheistical Hypotheses of *Nature* will, at last, be reduced. Sometimes by *Nature* is meant an active Principle, and then it either means the supreme Being, intimating not only his Power, but Method of acting; or else it signifies an inferior Agent actuating the World under him, in a stated Method; which is what some understand by the *Anima Mundi*. And in either of these Senses it implies, either immediately, or ultimately, wise Providence ordering all Things. But when any Thing else is meant by it, 'tis only puzzling the Cause to ascribe any real Power to it.

Now, setting aside the Use of this ambiguous Word, they who deny a free, active, wise and good Providence, making and governing the World, to be the first Cause of all these Effects, must be reduced to assert,

1. That there is really no such Thing as Wisdom, Power, or Goodness, in the World; or,

2. That what we esteem the Effect of such, is only the meer casual Result of Matter and Motion; or,

3. That all Things were from Eternity succeeding one another necessarily in the Way they now are.

1. That there is really no such Thing as Wisdom, Power, or Goodness in the World, and that therefore there can be no arguing from thence to prove a God, or a Providence, few of these atheistical Persons will directly say; but by their Earnestness to set aside all final Causes, as having nothing to do in making the World, they shew a great Inclination to close with it. For where there is no

final Cause, there is no antecedent Intention; and where all Intention is excluded, there is no intelligent Being, and consequently no Exercise of Wisdom or Goodness, nor indeed of Power properly so called. But if there be any such Thing as antecedent Design to be proved from Mens arguing, or their acting, then there is in the World some Being, which has Intelligence; that is, there is really Wisdom, Power, and Goodness in the World: And if the Effects of these appear more evident in the Formation of natural Things, than in the Contrivances of human Art, then it is absurd not to think the efficient Cause of them more intelligent than Man is. And since Man must proceed from some superior Cause, that Cause must have all the Perfections which Man has, in an eminent Degree, or else those Perfections would be caused by nothing, which is a Contradiction. But,

2. When they say, that what we account the Effects of Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, or of an intelligent Being, is only the mere, casual, or necessary Result of Matter and Motion, this will be liable to the foremention'd Absurdity. For if there be any intelligent Being in the World, as Man is allow'd to be, such Intelligence must either be a Perfection distinct from that of Matter and Motion, produced by some superior intelligent Being, which is itself neither Matter nor Motion; or it must be a Composition of unintelligent Figure and Motion; or it must be something caused by nothing.

Now that any Composition of unintelligent Figure or Motion should be Intelligence is absurd; because whatever the Composition of any material Thing is, it is still, in Reality, only that Thing, or Things, of which it is compounded; therefore, unless Figure be Thought, and all Matter have Sense, then no Matter, as such, can have it, or cause it. And then whatever has Sense, Perception and Understanding, if it be not caused by a superior,

or, intelligent, immaterial Being, must be caused by nothing, which is absurd.

3. To suppose that all Things are from Eternity, without any supreme intelligent Power to dispose them, or give them Motion, is absurd; that something has existed from Eternity is certain. This must therefore be some one self-existent, unchangeable, independent Being, from whence all Things receive their Being; or else there must be an eternal Succession of dependent changeable Beings, without any Cause at all; that is, there must be an infinite Series of Effects without any efficient Cause, which is absurd.

Thus I have endeavour'd briefly to represent the Absurdities, which they must of Necessity be driven to, who deny a supreme, intelligent, eternal, and self-existent Being to be the original Cause of all Things. And, therefore, since there is plain and evident Reason to convince them, that there is such a Being, they are without Excuse, if either they disown, or take no Notice of him; if they neither glorify him, as God, nor shew any Gratitude towards him.

This Consequence is what those Men, who are inclined to Atheism, would fain avoid. They take it ill that we should offer to persuade them, that they are under any Obligations to own the Belief of such a Being; or to tell them, that they can be under any Penalty for not believing, or not attending, to the Consequences of such Belief. Nay, farther they would persuade us, that it is inconsistent with that original Notion, or Idea of Goodness, which we must pre-suppose in God, if there is any such Being, to make any Man suffer for denying, or not believing his Being. [See *Characteristicks*, Vol. I. Pag. 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39.]

Indeed a good Man, who always acts according to his best Understanding, has no Reason to be afraid of any Deficiency in the divine Goodness towards him,

him, which is ever ready to compassionate even all such Mistakes as are purely involuntary. But what is this to a Man, that having Means of knowing God, yet either utterly denies, or takes no Notice of his Being? 'Tis certain that no man, who disputes against the Being of a God, can justly pretend to be ignorant of his Being. Nor can the Denial of his Being consist with any Kind of Reverence of him; for the first Foundation of all Respect, which we can pay him, must be an Acknowledgment of his Being. Let it then be but granted, that there are eternal and necessary Differences of Things, and that the Will of God determines itself to act according to the eternal Reason and Nature of Things, and that all rational Creatures are obliged to conform themselves, in all their Actions, to the eternal Rule of Reason, it will from hence follow, that there are unchangeable moral Obligations, or Laws of Nature, respecting Man's Behaviour towards the supreme Being, whose Creature and Subject he is, as well as towards his Fellow-creatures. And if right Reason be the same Thing, tho' in infinitely higher Degree, in God, than in other rational Beings; it must necessarily be his Will, that all Creatures should act according to their moral Obligations: And, consequently, as there are natural evil Consequences attending upon the Perversion of the natural Order of Things; and manifest Evils, both to Society and single Persons, flowing from the Transgression of the moral natural Law; so it cannot be consistent with the divine Reason, to make no Difference between those who act agreeably to the moral Nature of Things, and those that wilfully act otherwise; that is, he cannot have the same Regard for those who disown his Being, as for those who obey him. There is no Occasion to suppose any Malice, or Defect of Goodness, in the divine Nature, for making this Difference which the very Nature of Things

Things makes: And it is far from being the Perfection of Goodness to make those equal, whose moral Actions are unequal. And if this Way of Arguing were just, then he ought never to suffer any Man to be miserable, whatever his Demerits are; but we see, in Fact, that he has done it; and these Miseries are Punishments upon Men, for their wilful Transgressions of the Laws of Reason and Nature. So that we must either deny that any supreme Mind governs the World, or believe it consistent with his infinite Goodness to punish those who deny his Being, if he is a Being to whom we have any natural Obligation.

And thus Men may certainly be under a natural Obligation to the Belief of a God, and may make themselves incapable of receiving any Good from him by an obstinate Denial of his Existence, since upon the Acknowledgment of his Existence depends all the Sense of natural Duty that we can owe him.

And farther, whoever denies the Being and Providence of God, must own that he lives in a World where there is nothing good to be depended on, because there is no intelligent Mind to govern it. And have not Men Reason to dread the Consequences of such an Opinion, that can promise no Good, and may be the Cause of many unforeseen Evils, as long as the Mind itself shall exist? And if, moreover, the supreme Governor of the World cannot but testify his Favour and Displeasure, as rational Creatures act for or against their rational Nature, then this Favour or Displeasure must shew themselves sometime or other, unless we suppose that moral Perfections, in the supreme Being, have no Analogy to moral Perfections in other rational Beings, which is to destroy all Manner of Argument from the Nature of Things.

So that both from a Consideration of the natural and necessary Difference of Good and Evil, and the different Consequences resulting from them; and also

also from the Consideration of the moral Attributes and Perfections of the supreme Being, different Events of different Actions, and of different habitual Regards towards that supreme Being, are justly to be expected by every rational Agent; but if these Events cannot, at present, be applied distinctly, in just Proportion, to every Man, as we see they are not; then it is no Way inconsistent with divine Goodness to suffer such Distinction to have its due Effect hereafter.

This is reasonable to be expected; but how it must be done particularly, we must either be ignorant till that Time comes; when the Distinction shall be finally made; or we must in the mean Time, learn it from the divine Being himself, some Way discovering his Design or Will to us in this Matter.

And this will naturally lead us to consider whether he has made any particular Revelation of his Will to Man. And I observe,

I. That every rational Man, who believes a God and a Providence, is under a natural Obligation to enquire whether God has made any particular Revelation of his Will to Men, which they are concern'd to take Notice of.

II. That whoever seriously makes this Enquiry, will find it reasonable to conclude, that some Revelation may justly be expected from God, considering the general State of Mankind.

III. That if this be so, then it is every Man's Duty to find out what is true Revelation, and what is only pretended.

I. That every rational Man, who believes a God and a Providence, is under a natural Obligation to enquire, whether God has made any particular Revelation of his Will to Men, which they are any Way concern'd to take Notice of.

This Proposition may perhaps, at first Sight, seem to be useless, containing only an Assertion, which no one seriously will deny. But I am afraid that *Deism* may justly be counted a virtual Denial of
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this Assertion, or what will, in the End, revert to downright *Atheism*; that is, that such Men, who affect the Name of *Deists*, either mean no more than meer *Atheism* by it; or else if they do believe God's Being, and yet make no Enquiry after his Will, they must then believe his Existence only as a speculative Point; which, they think, does not put them under any Obligation of acting one Way or other in Consequence of it. This Kind of *Deism* is but one Remove from *Atheism* itself. Because tho' it owns a God, yet at the same Time it considers him as having no Concern for the moral World, or the Actions of Men, consider'd as moral Agents; which is, in Consequence, a denying of his moral Attributes.

To convince therefore such Men of their Obligation to enquire after the Will of God, we must first desire them to consider, that *Justice, Goodness, Truth*, and all moral Perfections, are as essential to the Notion of God, as *Wisdom* and *Power*; for they are, indeed, the necessary Consequences of infinite Wisdom and Power. It cannot be denied, but that there are different Things in the World, which have different Properties, and Degrees of Perfections. And from hence arise different Relations of one Thing to another, and a Fitness or Unfitness, according as different Things are applied or misapplied to one another. And there is the same natural Difference, and natural Consequence of that Difference, Fitness or Unfitness, in all Actions of every Being which can properly be called an *Agent*.

Now an infinitely wise Being, certainly, knows all these different Relations of things and Actions, with their respective Fitnesses and Consequences; or else his Understanding would be finite. And he does as evidently will that they should be as they are, because he preserves them in their Beings; and his Will cannot be influenced by any wrong Affec-
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tion, raised by any Temptation from without, to do otherwise than what is best to be done, because he is independent and omnipotent; so that *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Truth*, and all moral Perfections, must be in the divine Nature; unless we can suppose that he wills the Natures of Things to be as they are, and not to be as they are at the same Time, which is absurd.

Again; *Goodness*, in a free or rational Being, is nothing else but a Will to communicate Happiness to other Beings, according to their Capacities.

Now to communicate Being itself, and a Capacity of enjoying Happiness, according to that Variety of Natures, which infinite Wisdom thought fit to make, is the Foundation of all Goodness; and to communicate this further, according to those different Improvements, which intelligent Beings make, by Virtue of that Liberty of acting, which is essential to their Nature, is a Continuation of that Goodness. So that in Comparison of all other Beings, which are called good; we may truly say, *there is none good but God.*

Justice and Equity are nothing but a willing that the original and essential Differences of Things and Actions, and their Relations, and Fittestness one to another, should be entirely preserved throughout. Now the supreme Being, who knows all Things, and understands all Actions, will act accordingly, without respect of Persons: His infinite Wisdom and Power setting him above any Possibility of being deceived or over-ruled in his Acting.

And for the same Reason *Truth* and *Faithfulness* are necessarily Attributes of the same divine Being, who cannot be mistaken in his Designs, nor hinder'd from doing what he intends. And the like may be said of all other moral Perfections. For the Want of any moral Perfection, must proceed from apprehending Things to be otherwise than they are; or from a Want of Power to act according to the Nature

ture of Things; or from a Perverseness of Will, disposing him to act contrary to the true Reason of Things; but an eternal, intelligent, independent Being, infinitely wise and powerful, can be liable to none of these. For the two first Cases are directly, and the last, by necessary Consequence, a Contradiction to infinite Power and Wisdom.

From hence it follows, that the moral Perfections of all Creatures must be finite; but the moral Perfections of the supreme Being must be infinite. But then it does not follow, that *Goodness, Justice, Truth*, and other moral Perfections, are in Nature quite different Things in the divine Being, from what they are in other rational Beings, but only in Degree. And this ought to be observed carefully, because, if *Goodness, Truth, and Justice*, and the like moral Attributes, which we ascribe to God, be not the same for Kind as they are in us, then 'tis in vain to reason about them. Since, upon such Supposition, when we say, God is *just*, or *good*, or *true*, we can have no Meaning, because we have no Idea answering to the Words we utter; and this would effectually destroy the Foundation both of Religion and Morality. And all Manner of Reasoning about the divine Nature is taken away. For the Understanding and Power of God are as much above us as his moral Attributes, and our Ideas of of them as imperfect; so that if we cannot reason from the one, we cannot from the other.

Those Men, therefore, who pretend to magnify Reason, should consider that such a Supposition destroys all Use of Reason itself. For if true Reason be nothing else but the real Nature of Things, and their Relations to one another, truly apprehended in the Mind, to be as they are in themselves, then it must be the same for Kind in all intelligent Beings; or else the same will be true, and not true, at the same Time, which is a Contradiction.

But

But if moral Perfections do necessarily belong to the supreme Being ; and if we can have any true Notion of such Perfections, we may then justly argue that God does always act according to those Perfections ; and, consequently, that he considers the Actions of rational and free Agents, according to their moral Nature ; and that he will make such a Distinction between Good and Evil, as will sufficiently vindicate his own moral Perfections. For if he is the Governor of the rational as well as natural World, he will govern it according to these Perfections, which are inseparable from an infinitely, perfect, reasonable Being. But then we must not conclude, that he does not govern the World, only because we do not see immediate Rewards and Punishments in Proportion to the Behaviour of every rational and free Agent. For we cannot see the full Extent of his Government ; and therefore tho' we may be sure that he will treat Righteousness and Wickedness in a different Manner, yet the Revelation of his righteous Judgment is not confined to so short a Time as human Justice must be, which is limited by Time and Place. And from hence it happens that *Justice*, *Goodness*, and other moral Excellencies in Men, do often intrench upon, and limit one another, so that they cannot all fully be exercised for Want of sufficient Compass to exert themselves altogether, and for Want of Power and Knowledge in the Agent ; but God's Government is not limited by Time or Place, but is infinite and eternal, so that all his Perfections may have their full Exercise, and the due Effects of his *Justice*, *Goodness*, &c. may take Place in such Season as infinite Wisdom sees proper.

Therefore, before we can pass an exact Judgment upon the Justice and Goodness of God's Government, we must see the whole Scene of Providence unfolded, and all the various Dependence of Things upon one another, set in a true Light. When the
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final Issue of Things is come, we may depend upon it, that the whole Management will appear just and good.

Upon which Foundation we may justly build that natural Obligation which every rational Man is under, to enquire whether God has made any particular Revelation of his Will, which Men are concern'd to take Notice of.

For if we are persuaded, by the Light of Nature and Reason, that there is a supreme Being who made and preserves us, the same Light will convince us that we should be grateful to him. But now, since the divine Nature is infinitely perfect and happy in itself, wherein can any Gratitude towards him approve itself? Why, in a just Acknowledgment of his infinite Perfections, and in worthily receiving and using what his Goodness gives us. And since from the Consideration of the moral Perfections of his Nature, we are assured, that he acts according to the highest Reason, and since 'tis his Will that we should do so; upon these Considerations we are certainly obliged to be as much acquainted with the Will of God as we can, and to consider of every possible Way whereby we may come to the Knowledge of it.

For thus we may argue: A constant Disposition to do according to the Will of God, upon whom we depend for our Being, is an absolutely reasonable Instance of our Gratitude towards him. This we may call *Justice* towards God, since it is nothing else but ascribing to him that Honour of his infinite Perfections, which, is justly due to him. Now this Disposition to confirm ourselves constantly to the Will of God, must necessarily include an Endeavour to know what his Will is, and what Way he has thought fit to make it known to us (unless we know it to be impossible for him to discover it any other Way, but this one, which we call the Way of Nature, which I shall shew hereafter we cannot do.)

For tho' we may depend upon it, as his Will, that he should never act contrary to the Rules of Goodness, &c. because whatever contradicts these, contradicts his Nature, and cannot be his Will.

And tho' he has given us the Faculty of Reason, whereby to distinguish Good from Evil, and a Liberty to chuse according to that Distinction, yet because our Understandings are limited, and are apt to mistake Appearances for Truth, and to act accordingly (especially in Matters of Religion) we cannot but think it reasonable to desire a more perfect Direction from that Being itself, who cannot be mistaken. And this, at least, ought to make us enquire, whether this Being has made any such Discovery as will give us greater Light into our Duty, or direct us to better Assistance, and clearer Motives to perform it. Which leads me to consider,

II. That whoever seriously makes this Enquiry, will find it reasonable to conclude, that some Revelation may justly be expected from God, considering the general State of Mankind.

This is a Point which deserves to be very seriously consider'd, because it is the very Point upon which those who can truly be called *Deists*, begin to divide from such, as believe a divine Revelation; for he that believes a God and a Providence governing the World, and observing the Actions of Men, as every one must do, that can properly be called a *Deist*, and yet denies the Truth of Revelation, must either think, that it is impossible that God should make any such Revelation, or at least, that it is highly improbable, that he ever does make any; or else that Mankind has no Occasion for any such Revelation.

In Opposition, therefore, to this Kind of Reasoning, I shall endeavour to shew,

1. That there is no *Impossibility* that God should make a particular Revelation of his Will to Men.

2. That considering our natural Notions of the Goodness

Goodness of God, there is no Reason to think it *incredible*, that he should, at some Time or other, make such Revelation.

3. That considering the general Condition of Mankind, such Revelation is by no Means *unnecessary*.

1. That there is no *Impossibility* that God should make a particular Revelation of his Will to Men.

That God should, upon some Occasions, communicate his Will to Men in a particular Manner, implies nothing contradictory, either to the Nature of Man, or God. For, if we believe, that God made Men, with all the Powers of the Mind, whereby they can communicate their Thoughts to one another, notwithstanding the Mind, that communicates its Thoughts, is invisible; then it is unreasonable to suppose, that the Mind of Man is incapable of receiving any Revelation from the supreme Mind, only because that supreme Mind is of an invisible Nature. And it is more unreasonable to suppose the divine Being incapable of discovering his Will to the Mind of Man, as his Wisdom sees fit: For this would be in Effect to deny the Perfection of his Nature, and to make him a Being acting without Liberty or Choice: And this, in the End, is the same Thing, as denying him to be an intelligent Being, and must, at last, recur to Atheism. For what Difference is there between denying the Existence of God, and denying those Attributes, which are essential to an infinitely wise and powerful Being?

But I would desire them to consider the Absurdity that would follow from the denying a Possibility of his discovering his Will to Mankind, whatever the Occasion be, in any supernatural Way, not inconsistent with his infinite Perfections, or moral Attributes. Indeed, that God should be seen by mortal Eyes, implies a Contradiction to his Nature, because it would suppose him infinite, and limited to a particular Figure and Place, at

the same Time that we own him to be infinite, that is, every where, and without Figure. But then that he who is every where present, should have no Means of discovering his Will to intelligent Creatures, is a Thing repugnant to any just Notion of his infinite Power. For he that hath given to Man his Senses, and his Understanding, has he not Power to convey any Knowledge from himself to that Understanding? And is he not able to convince the Mind of Man as effectually of the Truth of what is conveyed to it, in an extraordinary Way, as it can be convinced of any other Truth of Things, that are without itself? Without Doubt it can. I proceed, therefore,

2. To observe, that considering our natural Notions of the Goodness of God, there is no Reason to think it *incredible*, that he should, at some Time or other, make such Discovery of his Will, especially when we consider, that in all Ages of the World Men have ever had such an Apprehension. Now it is certainly more agreeable to the Goodness of God, to suppose, that there is really at the Bottom some Foundation for such an Apprehension, than to think that Mankind should always be under such a Delusion, as constantly to believe and expect a Thing for which there never was any Ground or Occasion given. That Men should mistake in making false Deductions from a true Principle, or that they should ground many Errors upon one Truth misapprehended or corrupted, is not to be wonder'd at. But that they should, in all Ages, fall into the Belief of a Thing, upon which so much of their practical Conduct depends; and yet, that there should be no Probability of Fact or Reason to induce them to it, is not to be reconcil'd to common Sense to suppose.

Now, that in all Ages and Countries there has been a common Persuasion, that God did communicate

minate his Will to Mankind, in some Way or other, more than the general Way of Nature, is notorious in all Antiquity. [See *Cic. de Divinat. Lib. I.*] They were convinced, by the Event of Things, which had been foretold, that the divine Being did sometimes communicate the Knowledge of Things future. And tho' the immediate Conveyance of this Foreknowledge was by them supposed to be made to Men by Powers inferior to the supreme Deity, yet they own'd, that ultimately those Powers derived their Knowledge of Futurity from the *Supreme*, as appears from this Passage,

Quæ Phœbo Pater Omnipotens, mihi Phœbus Apollo Prædixit.

And, upon this Persuasion, they all had Recourse to Oracles in difficult Cases. And that they did not think the mere foretelling of future Events was all the Revelation which they might expect from God, is evident from hence, that there never was any Nation but what had some Sort of reveal'd Religion, real or pretended, among them, which gave them some Direction about their Worship, or Intercourse with the heavenly Powers. They generally believed the first Founders of Kingdoms to have received some Kind of Instruction from the Gods, for the future Establishment of their Government and Laws, especially in Matters of Religion. [See *Strabo, Lib. XVI. 762. Liv. I. Cap. 19. Plato in Minoe, Page 319. Ed. Steph.*] I grant that that which we meet with upon this Topic in Heathen Authors, has a great Mixture of Fable in them; but that, by which those Relations obtain so much Credit in the World, was this general Persuasion, that such Laws and Government as were most under divine Direction, must of Necessity be most perfect; and that God did communicate some Way or other, such express Directions to good Men.

I know, some doubt whether there ever was any

true Oracle deliver'd by these Oracles among the Heathen ; and others assert them to be all a Cheat ; and, no Doubt, there was a great deal of human Fraud in them. But yet, any one who carefully considers, what Account the least credulous of antient Writers give of them, will find it very difficult to prove, that never any other Agents, but human, had any Concern in them. There are some such express Predictions as cannot be denied ; nor is it so easy to account for them in the Way of human Artifice, as it is to shew, how they might, by wicked Spirits, have been collected from the true Oracles of God, and then deliver'd as their own, to gain Credit to that idolatrous Worship of wicked Spirits, into which, by the Judgment of God, those Nations were fallen, which had departed from the Worship of the one true God.

But let all these Oracles be never so much a Cheat, yet there must have been some Ground of Truth to build all this Cheat upon ; and the stronger the Cheat was, so much stronger must the Persuasion at first have been, of some real Revelation from God. For Errors may proceed from the Corruption of any Truth, but Truth is always the oldest. The first Writings of the *Old Testament* may be proved, beyond Dispute, the most antient of any Books now extant : And in those Writings we have an Account of very remarkable Revelations made to the antient *Patriarchs* ; and the whole History of the Life and Miracles of *Moses* were Things so remarkable, that the *Egyptians*, and other neighbouring Nations, had great Reason to know them, and from them these Notions might be propagated into other Parts of the World. And other Founders of Common-wealths might take Hints from thence to pretend to such extraordinary Ways of receiving their Laws from Heaven, as long as any Tradition of the first Truth remain'd. And *Strabo*, in his Account of *Moses* and his di-
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vine Polity [Lib. XVI. Page 761.] taking Occasion to mention *Minos*, and *Lycurgus*, and others, who pretended to a divine Direction for their Laws, seems as if he intended thereby to lead us into an Opinion, that they did but copy after this older and more excellent Legislator.

And besides all this, if we consider the scatter'd Remains of the antient heathen Tradition, and strip them of their fabulous Dress, we shall find manifest Footsteps of many antient Truths of Religion, whereof we have a more plain, as well as more consistent Narration, in the Books of *Moses*, and other sacred Writings.

Now the Use which I would make of all this, is to shew, that Mankind have generally been persuaded, that God did really reveal his Will to Men in some particular Manner or other. And since they have been possess'd of this Notion from the Infancy of the World, it seems most agreeable to our Notions of the divine Goodness, that such an Opinion should not always have been mere Delusion.

But because some Men pretend, that the natural Light of Reason is sufficient to direct our moral and religious Conduct, so that any other Revelation is needless. I shall, therefore, proceed to shew,

3. That considering the general Condition of Mankind, such Revelation is by no Means unnecessary. For,

1. It is evident, that there is a strange Corruption in human Nature, that the Generality of Men have hardly ever attended duly, at any Time, to the natural Dictates of their own Reason; and they who attended most to them, have frequently deviated from what they knew to be reasonable in many Instances. There is an unaccountable Mixture of Contrarieties in the Nature of Man as it now stands; the Seeds of something so very great in his reasoning Faculty, and at the same Time something so very weak and disorderly in his general

Use of it, that the most inquisitive have been greatly puzzled to give a true and satisfactory Solution of it. They saw that the State of Man, in this World, was far from being perfect, but the original Cause they could not find out. And till they knew the Cause of the Distemper, they could not possibly cure it. Here, therefore, a Revelation was necessary to shew Men their true Condition. But,

2. Suppose they had really known the true State of their own Case, yet the true Cure for it was more than human Power or Skill could effect. Some had Recourse to Philosophy. But the Disease was too inveterate to be cured by so weak a Medicine. The Philosophers themselves were, many of them as far from being amended by their own Prescriptions as any other. Very few of them formed their Minds and Manners according to the Dictates of true Reason, and their several Institutions were more an Ostentation of their Knowledge than a Rule of their Lives.

But some of them, we may suppose, were sincere Men; but they were very few, and their Authority so weak, and the World so corrupted, they could never hope to make any considerable Reformation in the Manners of Men: Nay, the best of them despair'd of any such effect from mere human Endeavours; and thought it enough to keep themselves free from the Contagion; and if they did attempt further, they made but few Converts. So that here is no Remedy to be expected from the Assistance of Philosophy. And yet this is what some modern *Deists* think sufficient to supersede the Necessity of all Revelation, as if here and there a Man of much Leisure, great Abilities, and a Good Disposition, were all that the divine Goodness should be supposed to have any Concern for. But such Notions are very unworthy of God, who is no Respector of Persons. Let it therefore be farther consider'd,

3. That supposing the Philosophers had really design'd

sign'd to reform Mankind, they were not qualified for it. As they knew not the first Cause of the Corruption of human Nature, so they could know nothing of God's Design in suffering it, nor of the Scheme of his Providence, by which he design'd to conduct Mankind out of it, into a more perfect and happy State than that from which they had fallen. They believed, indeed, the Immortality of the Soul and a future State of Rewards and Punishments, which are strong Motives to Obedience to the Law of Nature; yet their Conviction was not so uniform, as was necessary to persuade others, for they had no consistent Scheme to proceed upon: Tho' they could plainly discover from the Reason of Things, that Virtue was necessary to the Perfection of Man, yet their many Divisions, upon the *chief Good* or supreme Happiness of Man, was a great Hindrance to any good Influence upon those who heard them. Indeed they could declaim very well upon the Excellence of a virtuous Life in general, and of the immediate Advantage of several particular Virtues to the good of Mankind; but how to reduce them all to one consistent Scheme, so that ordinary Men might see the Obligation to practise them, in all Circumstances, was a Thing that few of them could attain to.

4. In Matters of Religion, which naturally have the greatest Influence upon the Mind of Man, and which therefore ought to be under the truest Direction of all others, they were still more deficient than in any Thing else. When Mankind had once fallen from the Worship of the one true God, they sunk by Degrees into the most abominable Idolatry, which was accompanied with such an universal Blindness, as to the true Nature of God and his Attributes; that if some Notion of God's Existence had not been deeply rooted in Nature, a general Atheism must have proceeded from such monstrous Practices. For as we find no antient Account of any that

that professed atheistical Principles, till Religion was quite corrupted; so after Things were come to this pass, we find several Pretenders to Infidelity. Now the Philosophers were so far from being able to make any considerable Reformation in this Matter, that they, generally speaking, made the Case worse; not only by suffering themselves to be drawn away by the Stream of vulgar Superstition, and complying with the idolatrous Practice; but likewise by endeavouring to find out some Distinction or other to justify it; or, at least, to excuse themselves in complying with it. If they could not apply some symbolical Meaning or other to the most absurd and ridiculous Ceremonies of their gross Superstition, by which they might seem to reconcile it to something that looked like natural Religion; yet, however, they defended it by the Law and Practice of the Country where they lived. [See *Plato. de. Leg.* lib. 4. pag. 717. *Cicer. de Leg.* lib. 2. *Epict.* cap. 38. *Cicer. de Nat. Deor.* lib. 2. cap. 23, 24, 28.] And, consequently, a divine Revelation was necessary to reform Men's Notions, and to reduce them to the Practice of Religion. But,

5. It is farther to be observed, that divers of the wisest Philosophers did themselves confess that they wanted a divine Revelation to set them right, even in Matters which were of the utmost Consequence. [See *Plato. de Repub.* lib. 4. pag. 427.]

And as to Matters of Morality as well as of Religion, they own'd, that as the State of the World then was, there was no human Means of reforming it. [See *Plato de Republick.* lib. 6. pag. 494. See also *Plat. Phædon.* pag. 85.] But they not only saw and acknowledged their great Want of a divine Revelation, to set them right in their Conduct, both towards God and Man; but likewise expressed a strong Hope or Expectation that God would, one Time or other, make such a Discovery as should dispel all Clouds of Darkness in which they were involv'd.

involv'd. [See *Platonis Alcibiad.* ii. pag. 150, 151.]

To these Considerations we may add,

6. That such Men as now think that no Revelation was ever necessary, but that the Want of it might have been supplied by the Use of Reason alone, do not state the Matter fairly; because they do not distinguish between those Notions which the mere Heathen were in Possession of before; and those they attain'd to after the Preaching of the Gospel. For Christianity made a very considerable Alteration, both in the Notions and Practices, even of those who continued obstinate Opposers of its Establishment. And tho' their Stile was not so polite, as that of some of the more antient Philosophers, yet their Thoughts and Reasonings were much improved. And as for our modern Deists, who have any tolerable Notion, either of natural Religion or true Morality, they are more beholden for it to that Light of Revelation, in which they live, than to any of those human Discoveries, which Philosophers, utterly destitute of such Revelation, or living before it, could certainly lead them to. So that when Men argue against the Necessity of Revelation, from the present Improvement of Reason, they argue against Fact and Experience. And if they were not both ungrateful in disowning and despising that Light, whereof they enjoy so great a Benefit; and extremely vain, in thinking so much better of their own Abilities, than they do of those of all the greatest Men before the Gospel; they could not but think it more likely, that such Men as *Socrates, Heraclitus, Plato, Cicero*, and others, should understand the State of the World in their own Time, and know how much could be done, in that State, towards finding true Religion, and bringing Men to the Practice of it, upon the Foot of mere human Reason, much better than we can do at this Distance; when we cannot be so sensible of the
Want

Want of Revelation experimentally, because we are prevented by the antecedent Enjoyment of it. Men who are bred up in Christian Countries, where the great Principles, both of natural and reveal'd Religion, are profess'd, even tho' they have never strictly consider'd the additional Evidence which Revelation gives, yet will be able to see how agreeable to natural Reason and Conscience, many things, in this Light, now appear to be, which they could never have so clearly discover'd, if they had not been so effectually, tho' to themselves insensibly, assisted.

So tho' there be now no Occasion for any new Revelation to make the Principles of natural Religion better understood, since we can by the Help of that Light, which we already had from Heaven, make such Use of our natural Reason, as to see our original Obligation in Point of Religion and Morality; yet without that Light, Men were fallen into such an Incertainty, that the wisest of them could not find the Way out of it. And why should any Man now think, that if he had been in the same State, he should have better Success?

And therefore from these Considerations we may conclude, that as in the Nature of Things there is no Impossibility of God's revealing his Will to Men, nor, considering God's Goodness, any Reason to think it incredible; so considering the general Condition of Mankind without it, such Revelation is by no Means to be looked upon as useless and unnecessary.

I proceed now to consider,

III. That it is every Man's Duty to use all proper Means to find out what is true Revelation, and what is only pretended.

For if it be agreed, that every rational Man, who believes a God and a Providence, is under a natural Obligation to enquire whether God has made any particular Revelation of his Will which we are concern'd to take Notice of; and if the serious Enquirer

quirer will find it reasonable to conclude from the Goodness of God, that some Revelation might be expected: Then it is reasonable that every Man should apply himself to find out what is the true, that he might not be imposed upon by admitting equally all Pretences to Revelation, nor cut himself off from all Benefit that may arise from that which is true, by respecting all equally.

It is evident, that there has been long in the World, a great Variety of Pretences to Revelation, which cannot all be true; and it is on the other Hand very plain, that if there never had been any true Revelation, there could never have been any Ground for Men's universally making such Pretences to it, unless we could suppose God had laid our Nature under a Necessity of being deceived, which is inconsistent with his Goodness; and therefore we must either strictly examine all the particular Pretences to it, or else we must fix upon some general acknowledged Principle, which may distinguish the true from the false.

Now if it can be made appear, that there is any one continued and standing Revelation, the Parts of which have successively given Light to one another, tho' deliver'd at different Times, and upon different Occasions; and which has all the internal Marks of Goodness and Truth, and all the external Evidence of Fact of its being from God. If it appeals to the Reason of Mankind, and never fears their Examination; nor can be reasonably accused of Imposture, by those who saw the Facts, which were intended to give Testimony to it, it must certainly be of God; and all other Revelations false.

And that there is such a Revelation, to which we may apply ourselves for the Knowledge of all such Truth as is necessary, in order to conduct our Lives according to the Will of God; and that this Revelation is from God, I will endeavour to shew, by considering not only the Nature of Miracles, which
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give Attestation to any Revelation, but the Nature of the Revelation itself, which Miracles are wrought to establish. And this in the following Method.

I. I will shew what we are to understand by a Miracle.

II. That the Possibility of Miracles is not contrary to Reason.

III. How we may distinguish such Miracles as are from God; from such as are wrought, or pretended to be wrought, in Confirmation of Error.

IV. Wherein that Assurance consists, which Miracles, thus distinguish'd, give us, that the Person employ'd in working them has a divine Commission.

V. What Evidence we now have from the Miracles anciently wrought, that the Christian Doctrine, contain'd in Scripture, is truly a divine Revelation, and to be embrac'd as such.

I. I will shew what we are to understand by a *Miracle*.

A *Miracle* is a strange Effect, obvious to the Senses of the Beholders, yet produced by supernatural Means, or by the Interposition of some Power, superior to all human Powers, that we know of, invisibly assisting the Person at whose Instance the Effect is produced, and by Consequence giving Attestation to it. So that to make any Thing a true and significant Miracle, there are required these three following Considerations.

1. That the Effect produced be something obvious to the Senses.

2. That it be supernatural.

3. That it be done for some evident End and Design.

1. That the Effect produced be something obvious to the Senses of the Beholders; otherwise it can be no Miracle.

Thus the Miracles recorded in Scripture, are Things that did really and evidently appear to all Beholders;

Beholders ; the Facts were such as appeal'd to the Testimony of the Senses for the Reality of them, being plain, beyond all Dispute, to those that were present. The next Condition required, is,

2. That the Effect be supernatural, or exceed all natural human Power, either in respect of the Matter, as raising the Dead to Life again, or such as in the Manner, exceeds all human Power, as the curing Diseases by a Word speaking ; and so it is to speak divers Languages without ever having learn'd them. But by *supernatural*, I do not mean such a Power as exceeds the natural Power of every created Being whatsoever ; but only that it exceeds all the known Powers of the visible Agent. For, I suppose, that both good and bad Angels are able to do Things far exceeding all human Power, and being invisible to us, may do, or assist Men to do, Things which are to us truly miraculous.

And thus several Things recorded in Scripture as miraculous, are said to be done by Angels. [See 2 Kings xix. 35. Matt. xxviii. 2. Acts v. 19.]

Nay some Things which are said to be done by God himself, are in other Places also said to be done by Angels, as being done at his Command ; as the rescuing of *Lot*, and the Destruction of *Sodom*. So that unless we knew the full Extent of all the natural Powers of all such invisible Beings, we cannot, in every Instance, exactly distinguish such Effects, as are wrought by God, from such as are wrought by his Command or Permission ; unless it be where the Things themselves are particularly ascribed to him, or are of such a Nature as require an almighty Power to perform.

Wicked Angels also may Work Miracles, by God's Permission, without exceeding their natural Power. This seems to be plainly supposed in divers Places of Scripture. [See Deut. xiii. 1, 2. Mat. xxiv. 24.] And we find that the *Magicians* of *Egypt* did some of the same Miracles as *Moses* did. [Exod. viii.]

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There are some, indeed, that suppose these Miracles of the *Magicians* were not really done, but that Men's Senses were only deluded; for which there does not seem to be any Ground from the Text.

Nor does such a Supposal make the Matter the less miraculous. For it does not require a less Power to alter all the Organs of Sensation in a Multitude of By-standers, than it does to alter the Things that are the Objects of Sense, in a Matter which is properly to be determined by our Senses. And if no farther Miracles had been wrought by *Moses* and *Aaron*, but the same which the *Magicians* did, or persuaded the Beholders, upon the Credit of their Senses, that they did; then the Beholders would have had no Means of distinguishing by the Miracles, which of them acted by the superior Power; but must have had Recourse to some other Kind of Evidence, to prove which of them was from God; for they could not tell whether *Moses* or the *Magicians* deluded their Senses. Besides, the supposing all such Miracles to have been Delusions of Sense, is a great Weakening of all Arguments from Matter of Fact, which relies upon Evidence of Sense. For if the same Appearances can be caused when a Thing is not done, as when it is, how can I ever know whether it is done or no?

And thus they who think none can work Miracles but God, will find it as difficult to prove when Miracles are really wrought, as it can be, supposing them wrought, to prove what are from God, and what are from wicked Spirits. Indeed the Scripture tells us of *lying Wonders* (2 *Thess.* ii. 9.) But this does not hinder, but that some of the Works of Satan may be such Wonders, as are truly above any human Power to effect. And those may be called *lying Wonders*, which are wonderful Things, really done in order to establish a Lye. And the Apostle seems to intimate thus much in telling us for what Reason God does justly permit those

those to be deceived who are not sincere Lovers of Truth. (*Ver.* 10, 11, 12.) Now if it be not inconsistent with the Goodness of God to suffer such Men to be deceived by *lying Wonders* of one Kind, why not of another? No Doubt, the Devil is as willing to exert his natural Power as far as God permits, for the deceiving of Mankind, as wicked Men are. And the Consequence of Men's being deceived, will be the same in one Case as in the other.

The *Deists* deny there can be any such Thing as a Miracle; because they see the Frame of the World disposed in an uniform Manner, and its Motions preserved in a constant regular Course, so that there is a constant Succession of Effects following their Causes, as it were by a stated Law; from thence that the Course of Nature never admits of any Change; as if the material World were something independent upon the Will of God, and had an original Power of its own, which no intelligent Being could control. From an ambiguous Use of the Word *Nature* Men are apt to confound Causes and Effects; and from hence they ascribe an active Principle to Things which are passive. This leads them to think, that what they call the Course of Nature cannot be alter'd, but by some Power superior to that Power by which it is preserved.

This will determinate in a Supposition, that the World preserves it self, or that there is no Necessity that it should be made by an intelligent Being; whereas if Men would carefully distinguish between that which really acts, and that which is acted upon, they might soon be convinced, that as the material World has no Power or Will of its own, nor can ever begin Motion or Action; so that whatever is moved or acted, must originally be moved by some intelligent Being, and consequently all Things which are done in the World, are either done immediately by God himself, or by some inferior intelligent Beings; Matter having no Powers but what

an intelligent and free Being imposes upon it. So that, properly, the Course of Nature in general, is nothing else but that continual uniform Manner in which the supreme intelligent Being produces certain Effects; and this Manner of Acting, depending upon his Will, may be alter'd as he pleases. So that what we call a Miracle requires no more Power, in the real Agent, than what we call the Course of Nature.

Men may, if they please, call the working a Miracle a Violation of the Laws of Nature; but then they should consider what they mean by Laws of Nature, and not make a free Being necessarily subject to those Laws of Motion, by which it chuses to produce ordinarily such and such common Effects upon Matter, which we therefore call natural because usual; not that they are antecedently necessary, in respect of the first Agent, whether it be the Supreme, or any inferior intelligent Being, which has a real Power of Acting, and not barely a Capacity of being acted upon. And from this Way of Reasoning it follows, that Miracles are not impossible, and consequently capable of a rational Proof.

3. Another Consideration requisite to make an Effect miraculous in the strict Sense, is, that it be done for some evident Design and End.

Every unusual Event is not a Miracle to us. A Miracle is to be consider'd from its End and Use, as, *An Effect produced in a Manner contrary to the usual Method of Providence, by some invisible intelligent Being, superior to Man, in order to give Testimony to the Truth of something which would otherwise appear, at least, doubtful or uncertain.* The next Thing therefore that I observe is,

II. That the Possibility of Miracles, such as we have been describing, is not contrary to Reason; and consequently their Credibility is capable of a rational Proof.

Wherever Miracles are wrought, they are Mat-
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ters of Fact, and may be proved by proper Evidence, as other Facts are. And tho' I cannot give a mechanical Account of the Manner how they are done, because they are done by the unusual Interposition of an invisible Agent, superior both in Wisdom and Power, to myself; I must not therefore deny the Fact which my own Senses testify to be done. The Truth is, we can no more solve the ordinary *Phænomena* of Nature, without having Recourse, at last, to an intelligent Being, than we can Miracles. In one Case, indeed, we know more of the Circumstances which go before and follow, because we see the Things oftner than we do in the other Case; but still the first Mover is the same in both. And as he testifies the constant Interposition of his Providence, acting either mediately or immediately, in the one Case; so does he likewise testify an extraordinary Interposition in the other. And I have no more Reason to disbelieve Miracles well attested, and not repugnant to the Goodness or Justice of God, only because they were done several Ages ago, than I have to disbelieve the more ordinary Occurrences of Providence, which passed before my own Time, because the same Occurrences may never, in a continued Train, happen again while I live.

Supposing, therefore, that Miracles do not imply any Thing impossible to be done, we are next to consider,

III. How we may distinguish such Miracles as are from God, from such as are wrought, or pretended to be wrought, in Confirmation of Error or false Doctrine.

And that is to be done, partly, from the Miracles themselves; and, partly, from the End for which they are done. And if both these are worthy of God, we may justly conclude they are from him.

I. As to the Miracles themselves, those which are divine, will have some apparent advantageous

Circumstances to distinguish them from what are diabolical, if they are sincerely attended to. As for Instance,

(1.) Their Greatness often discovers whence they proceed: It was this which distinguish'd the Miracles of *Moses* and *Aaron* from those wrought by the *Magicians*. In like Manner we find *Simon Magus*, upon the Appearance of the Apostles, was presently put out of Countenance, by the Exercise of a Power which he could not pretend to. And *Elymas* was struck blind by *St. Paul*. And it is acknowledged by the *Heathens* themselves, that the Miracles wrought by their false Gods ceased, and their Oracles were put to Silence, about the Time that Christianity began to be preached.

(2.) The Number of Miracles, and especially when they are of different Kinds, is another Mark of Distinction.

Thus the Miracles of *Moses* were many, of several Kinds, and very remarkable, and such as the whole Nation was witness to. And those of our Saviour were neither few nor private, but wrought before Multitudes of both Enemies and Friends.

(3.) When Miracles are of long Continuance, then they shew the Power of God. Of this Nature were the Miracles of *Moses*, and those of *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles. They were not presently over, but lasted many Years. And both *Jews* and *Christians* are a standing Monument of them, and of the Truth of those wonderful Prophecies which accompanied them. But,

(4.) The Goodness of Miracles is a great Sign of their being from God, or good Angels employed under him. The Wonders which the Devil and his Angels work, will either be wicked or mischievous, or, at least, freakish and fantastical, such as serve to no good Purpose, but only to amuse and affright the Beholders. But divine Miracles, as they proceed from the Author of all Good, so they are
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in their Nature beneficial to Men. And if we consider those that are mention'd in Scripture, we shall find that they always tended to some great and excellent Purpose, such as the Comfort and Support of good Men, and Deliverance from great Danger. Indeed the Plagues of *Egypt* were severe Miracles upon a cruel Nation; but even these were at the same Time Instances of Mercy to an oppressed People, who were thereby deliver'd from a long and hard Bondage, as well as Evidences of that divine Revelation, which was to be made to them. And all our Saviour's Miracles were Instances of the greatest Charity to Men.

So much for the Marks to distinguish Miracles themselves. I come now,

2. To consider the Ends for which Miracles are wrought, in order to judge truly from whence they proceed.

For if it be such as is plainly unworthy of God, or contradictory to his Perfections, and moral Attributes; or if it overthrows what he has already establish'd by many unquestionable Miracles, then another Miracle cannot be sufficient to prove it. (See *Deut.* xiii. 1. *Gal.* i. 8.) I proceed now,

IV. To shew wherein that Assurance consists, which Miracles, so distinguish'd, give us, that the Person employ'd in working them has a divine Commission.

Our Assurance in this Case depends upon our natural Notions of the Truth and Goodness of God. He cannot deceive any more than he can be deceived. And, therefore, as we cannot conceive it to be a Thing worthy of the divine Majesty to work a Miracle for no End at all, so much less can we conceive it to be consistent with the Perfection of his Nature to work one on Purpose to deceive an innocent and sincere Seeker of Truth. Now that God is a God of Truth is confessed by all Men; and unless it were so, we can have no Assurance even of the

Truth and Certainty of our own Faculties; and consequently can never be able to judge aright of Truth or Falshood in any Case.

But since our fundamental Notion of God is, that he is a Being of all possible Perfection: And since Truth and Fidelity are allowed to be moral Perfections, necessary to an intelligent Being, we cannot suppose him deficient in these, without derogating from the allow'd Perfection of his Nature; much less can we ascribe the contrary to him; which we must necessarily do, when we imagine that he employs his Power to give Credit to a Falshood; or authorizes any Man to work a Miracle in his Name to confirm an Untruth; or that he suffers any Man to use such a Power as cannot be distinguish'd from divine, in Confirmation of an Error, without giving some sufficient Means to an honest Mind to disprove him, if he attempts it.

Upon these Considerations we may justly conclude, that whatever Revelation is attended with such Miracles, as I have described divine Miracles to be, must necessarily be a divine Revelation; and that we cannot otherwise be deceived by it, but either by our own Negligence, in not attending to the Terms in which it is deliver'd, and thereby mistaking its Meaning; or by wilfully perverting the Sense of it. And there is no Objection, to which this Way of Reasoning from the Truth of God to the Truth of Revelation thus attested, is liable, but only this, that a Person, who has wrought true Miracles in the Name of God, may possibly afterwards revolt from the Truth; and by Virtue of that Credit, which his former Miracles gave him, may teach another Doctrine for which he has no Commission. Now to clear the Objection, which may be made from hence, concerning the Difficulty of discerning between the true and pretended Revelations, there are these two Things to be consider'd.

1. Tho'

1. Tho' it be supposed that a Person, once truly commission'd by God to declare his Will, may possibly forsake or transgress the Terms of his Commission, and declare that afterwards which is not the Will of God; yet it is no ways probable that he should then be assisted with the same Power of working Miracles as he was at first. God can easily withdraw his Credentials, when they are made an ill Use of; And his Goodness will prompt him to do so. But,

2. Those Persons, to whom any Doctrine is propounded, are supposed to have a Capacity, and to lie under an Obligation to use their own Reason and Judgment, in distinguishing between greater and less Evidence, as well as in discerning when one Doctrine contradicts another. They are likewise supposed to have the Knowledge of the common Principles of natural Religion to go upon, and to act according to those Principles, that they may not be deceived in admitting any pretended Revelation which contradicts them. And, therefore, suppose we were once convinced by a plain Miracle, that a Message deliver'd to them by such a Person, was really a Message from God; this ought not to make them absolutely depend upon every other Message, which the same Person might deliver afterwards, without examining, whether they agreed with that original Message, for which his Credentials were first given him. For this would be an unreasonable Credulity, which might destroy all rational Faith in Revelation; inasmuch as it would expose a Man to the Belief of Contradictions, as often as a Man, that had once a true Revelation, should think fit, upon the Credit of that, to pretend to another, which was not true. And to this Purpose there is a remarkable Instance in the *Old Testament*, of a Prophet punish'd for too easy a Credulity in the pretended Revelation of another Prophet, without considering how far a former certain Revelation made to

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himself, which it contradicted, was to be attended to (See 1 *Kings* xiii.) in Opposition to it.

Now to apply this to the Case, put by St. *Paul*, of an Apostle, or an Angel from Heaven, preaching another Gospel than what had been received upon the highest Evidence. We may justly reason, that they ought not to be regarded by any one who knew and believed the divine Authority of the first Publishers. Because two contradictory Revelations cannot be both from God: And the first being admitted upon the greatest Evidence of divine Authority, whoever pretends by that Authority to offer another, contradicting what he has before deliver'd, may indeed weaken the Credit of the former, as far as his Testimony goes, but can never establish the Credit of the latter; because I can never have greater Assurance of the Truth of any Revelation whatever, than I can have that Contradictions cannot be true.

Upon the Whole, therefore, the Evidence which we have from Miracles of the Truth of any Revelation, supposes the Truth of our own Faculties, and the first Principles of Reason: It supposes a Belief of God, and his Goodness and Truth. And whatever is contradictory to these cannot be capable of any Proof, because the Argument to prove by, and the Thing intended to be proved, destroy one another. And, therefore, if the Evidence of divine Miracles is ever alledged in Proof of any Doctrine contradictory to the divine Attributes, we may be sure there is some Mistake in the Application. And this makes it proper to shew the Reasonableness of the whole Christian Revelation, and that it is a Doctrine every Way worthy of God, even at the same Time that we prove its divine Authority by unquestionable Miracles. For as in the Proof of any Relation whatever, and the Nature of the Evidence, and the Nature of the Thing to be proved, are both to be consider'd, so in Case of a Revelation
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on said to be from God, and the Evidence which is brought to prove it such, are carefully to be attended to, before we can truly judge, whether the Proof, and the Thing to be proved, answer one another. If the Miracles are divine, the Doctrine to which they give Testimony is divine also: But if the Doctrine is supposed false, the Miracles, that offer to prove it, cannot be true. And this is no more arguing in a Circle, than what is contain'd in every *hypothetical* Syllogism.

And thus from the Nature of human Testimony, and the Evidence it gives to such Relations as are supported by it, we may see the Connection between divine Testimony, or Miracles, and divine Revelation; only there is this advantageous Difference on the Side of divine Testimony, that it is a more certain Proof of what it is intended for, than any human Testimony can be, because it proves the Truth of what it is rightly applied to. And if we are led into any Mistakes, it must be in our misunderstanding the Doctrine, or misapplying the Evidence. For if a Doctrine be contradictory to the divine Nature, as no Miracles can prove it true, so no divine Miracles were ever wrought with Intent to prove it. Our natural Notions of the Truth of God forbid us to think so unworthily of him. And herein consists, that Assurance which divine Miracles give us, that the Person employed in working them, has a divine Commission.

I proceed now to shew,

1. What Evidence we have now from the Miracles anciently wrought, that the Christian Doctrine, contain'd in Scripture, is truly a divine Revelation, and to be always embraced as such.

Ancient Miracles are so far an Evidence of the Doctrine of Scripture as we can have any Certainty of these two Things.

1. That such Miracles were really wrought.

2. That the Doctrine contain'd in Scripture, is the same Doctrine which was then revealed, and for which they were wrought. And

And for both these we have as good Evidence as the Nature of the Things is capable of. Besides an inward Revelation from God to a Man's own Mind, there are but two possible Ways whereby we can be assured of any Matter of Fact, as the Thing now in Question is.

The first is the Evidence of our own Senses, and the second is a sufficient Testimony of credible Witnesses.

The first Kind of these Assurances, no Man can have for the thousandth Part of those Things he believes, and it would be unreasonable to desire it. Those who lived in our Saviour's Time, could not all have this Kind of Evidence. Many of them depended upon the Testimony of others, which is the second Way of Assurance. But now this being of divers Kinds, and admitting of different Degrees of Credibility, according to the Capacity, Integrity, Means of Information, and other Advantages, which those have who give Testimony: and their Manner of delivering it being also of two Kinds, by Word of Mouth, or in Writing, we ought to consider, whether we have not, in all these Respects, the very best Kind of Testimony that we can desire. Living Evidence can belong to none, but those who lived when the Things were done; but then they who lived after, may have all the Particulars convey'd down to them in Writing, which may be more authentic than any single oral Evidence can be. A History, written at the Time when the Things are done, by Persons of unquestionable Integrity, and capable, in all Respects, of giving true Evidence, is the best human Ground of Assurance that any Fact, at such a Distance, is capable of. Now the Miracles of Christ, and his Followers, and an Account of the Revelation which they made, have stood upon such a Record from the very Time. For the same original History, which gives an Account

count of the Miracles, gives an Account of the Doctrine, for the Establishing of which those Miracles are said to be wrought. So that whatever Evidence we have, that the Relation of the Miracles recorded in Scripture is true, we have the same Evidence, that the Doctrine of the Scriptures is the same, which was then deliver'd. And accordingly these are now inseparable Parts of the same Record, and must stand or fall together. And unless we are resolved to disbelieve every Thing we do not see, we have as good rational Ground of Assurance of the Truth of this Record, as we can desire.

But if it be objected, that we ought to have here stronger Evidence than what might satisfy us in other Cases of less Concern. I answer,

1. That the very making this Objection is a Sign, that Men are not so sincere Lovers of Truth, as they ought to be. For if when two Things equally evident are proposed, a Man should say, I will believe the one, because I have no Concern in it; but I will not believe the other, because, if I do, it must make a great Alteration in my Conduct, which I am resolved against, would not this be look'd upon as Prejudice? The great Moment of the Thing is, indeed, a very good Reason, why we should be more than ordinarily inquisitive about it; but it is no Argument against believing it upon sufficient Evidence, or for requiring more than is necessary, tho' we may be glad, when upon Enquiry, we find it more abundant, than we expected. A Truth of small Consequence may sometimes by the Nature of it, have a greater Number of Evidences to it, than another; which is of more Moment; and yet, if the latter have sufficient to prove it, we ought to be satisfied. But,

2. The Providence of God has removed this Scruple.

1. By unquestionable Records of our Religion, and that first Evidence by which it was proved. And,

2. By

2. By divers subsequent Evidences given to it, which do more particularly affect the following Ages.

1. The Records of our Religion, both as to the Miracles and the Doctrine, have more evident Marks of Truth, than any other antient History, if we consider either the Books themselves, in which the Things are designedly written, or the collateral Evidence to the Facts, occasionally deliver'd by those, who were no Parties to them.

1. As to the Books themselves. They were written by Persons well acquainted with what they wrote; who had no worldly Interest to advance by what they wrote; but, on the contrary, knowingly ventur'd their Lives for asserting the Truth of what they wrote; nay, laid them down in Defence of it. And that they had the Spirit of God directing them in all necessary Truth they proved, by the Miracles they wrought. These Writings were soon dispersed into different Nations, and translated into their Languages, and read constantly in publick. And tho' the constant Use of these Writings made them very often to be transcribed, by which Means there must, of Necessity, be various Readings, and verbal Mistakes, yet this great Number of Copies, has been a great Security to all the essential Doctrines contained in them.

And farther, that these Books were written at the Time pretended, and by the Persons, to whom they are prescribed, we have a more universal Testimony than can be produced, for any other Writings so antient. But,

2. We have also very considerable collateral Evidence to the Facts recorded in those Writings occasionally given by those, who were no Parties to them. There are many remarkable Passages, both in *Jewish* and *Heathen* Authors, *Greek*, and *Roman*, which accidentally confirm'd the Truth of those Accounts which we have in the Gospel History, in

in Point of Time, and of Persons, and of divers extraordinary Facts. And as to the Miracles of our Saviour, the most learned primitive Enemies to Christianity, such as *Celsus*, and *Porphyry*, have given sufficient Testimony to them in Point of Fact, even by their Way of writing against them. I come now,

2. To shew, that there are divers successive, subsequent Evidences to the Truth of Christianity, which more particularly affect the Ages after its first Promulgation, and which are a Kind of standing divine Attestation to the Truth of it, and do, in a great Measure, supply to us the Want of that immediate sensible Evidence of Miracles, which was peculiar to those who heard the first Preaching of it, *viz.*

1. Such extraordinary Effects, as either attended, or were consequent upon, the first Preaching of the Gospel.

2. The successive Accomplishment of Prophecies deliver'd by Christ and his Apostles.

1. Such extraordinary Effects as either attended, or were consequent upon the first Preaching of the Gospel. Of which Kind we may reckon,

1. The surprizing Manner of its Propagation into all Parts; that the Apostles, who were unlearned Persons, should set about such a great Work as that of persuading the World into the Belief of the Resurrection of Christ was, for the declaring of which they ran such Hazards, is a Proof, that they themselves were persuaded of the Truth and Importance of it, and also of the mighty Consequences to be drawn from it. That they should hope for Success, notwithstanding their own Weakness, and the mighty Opposition they were sure to meet with, could be owing to nothing, but to an inward Consciousness of divine Assistance.

But that they should succeed in this Design, and persuade Men of all Ranks, not only to believe,
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but to engage themselves to maintain the Belief of a Thing, against all their present Interest, was nothing less than God could effect.

If this Device had been of Men, it must have come to nought, since it wanted all those Advantages which can give an Imposture any Probability of succeeding. The Apostles had neither Policy to awe, Cunning to deceive, or Pretence of worldly Interest to draw in. Nor were their Doctrines suited to the corrupt Inclinations of Men; but, on the contrary, commanded them to mortify every unruly Desire. And yet, under all these Circumstances, they planted the Doctrine of a crucified Saviour, and persuaded Men to believe in him; without the Assistance of any human Art or Eloquence. Had they not known assuredly, that God would work with them, they could not have hoped for Success. They could not but know, that *Judas* of *Galilee*, and *Theudas*, who had attempted Innovations, perish'd in their Designs. They knew the Hatred of the *Jews* against Christ, and could not but foresee what a Storm it would raise, to declare them guilty of his innocent Blood. And moreover, if they had been taught a *cunningly devised Fable* of their own Contrivance, they had Reason to suspect some of themselves under severe Trials would detect it. And yet none of these obvious Considerations, nor even the Prospect of Death itself, could discourage them. They did not value their Lives, so they might fulfil their Ministry. Now their Success was answerable to their Courage; they went on, and prevailed every Day, and left behind them, in every Part of the World, living and growing Evidence, that they had been there. And yet they did not arrogate any of this Success to their own Power, but only to the Grace of God, and to the Evidence of those Miracles, which he enabled them to work, *1 Cor. ii. 4.* Against which no human Power was
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able to stand, 1 *Cor.* i. 20, 27. But we are to consider,

2. The marvellous Effects which it had upon those who attended it, wherever it was propagated. It was not only entertain'd as a Piece of News, or a Matter of Speculation, but it had deep Influence upon the Lives and Manners of those, who entertain'd it. No sooner did Men become Christians, but they led Lives so innocent and virtuous, that they challeng'd their Enemies to object any Thing against them. How stedfastly did all Degrees of them profess the Belief of another Life, and a future Judgment, and an Eternity of Rewards and Punishments. With what Constancy did they despise all Considerations of this World, in Comparison of an happy Resurrection? And how freely did they submit to any Sort of Death rather than deny their Saviour?

Now that a few unlearned and plain Men should, in a few Years, bring over to the Faith in Christ, vast Numbers in every Country where they came, of all Ages, Professions and Religions, against all the Power and Learning of the World, and amidst all the Malice and Persecution against it; and that this Faith should make such a Change in their Lives, and Actions, are such Effects, as no considering Man can deny to be the Work of God. Therefore, it must be concluded, either that the Original of this Doctrine, and the Miracles by which it was confirm'd, were such as they are in Scripture represented to be; or else, that this wonderful Effect was produced in a Manner, if possible, yet more miraculous, that is, without any such Means at all. Now is it not much more probable, as well as more agreeable, to all the Accounts which History gives us of those Times, that such Miracles were wrought at the first Planting of the Gospel, and that divers of them continued to be wrought for a considerable Time, than that it should

should gain such a lasting Establishment, as we see it has done, contrary to all probable human Means, and yet be without such Evidence.

But that the Apostles themselves, and many other Christians for a considerable Time did continue to work Miracles, the most inquisitive Heathens could not tell how to deny. And, therefore, to avoid the Force of the Argument, which the Christians drew from thence, to prove that Jesus was a divine Person, some of them had Recourse to these two Methods, which yet, in the End, turn'd to the Establishment of the Gospel, and the utter Confusion of Idolatry.

1. They raked together all the old Stories they could meet withal, of strange Things done by some antient Philosophers, or even Magicians and Impostors, to which they added some new ones of their own, and these they set up in Opposition to the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles. [See *Orig. contra. Cels. p. 125, &c. Herodot. Lib. IV. Cap. 13, 14. De vita Pyth. Sect. 29.*] And from thence argued, *If such great Men as these, of whom such strange Things are related, are not worshipped as God, why should the Christians account Jesus a God only for having done such Wonders.*

To which the Christian Apologists answer'd, that they denied that there was any good Evidence to prove those pretended Facts, as there was for the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles: And that supposing they had been true, they were ridiculous, they tended to no good Purpose. Nor did they pretend to be design'd for any good Use by the Providence of God; nor were any of them foretold by antient Prophets as *Jesus*, and that Design of his coming into the World was long before he came. Neither had they such Effects as follow'd from the Miracles of *Jesus*, and his *Apostles*, by which great Numbers were brought to embrace a holy Institution, and forsake their
former

former Superstitions. For these Reasons, and also because they saw some visible Powers exercised in the Name of *Jesus*, they justly thought his Doctrine to be the Doctrine of God, and his Miracles divine Works. [See *Orig. contra Cels. Lib. III. p. 127.*] But then,

2. That the Opposers of Christianity might seem to have something among them like that Power of the Spirit of God, whereof they saw some visible Effects among Believers, many of the Philosophers themselves of that Time, and some of *Julian's* Friends, betook themselves to the most diabolical Superstition, Charming, Necromancy, pretending to Divinations, Ecstacies, Inspirations, nocturnal Visions, and frequent conversing with their Gods and Heroes. These enthusiastical Practices they call'd *Theurgical*, as if there had been something divine in them; and by this Method they hoped to keep the old *Gentile* Idolatry in some Credit. But this Pretence to something supernatural, tho' it might impose upon the *Gentiles*, could not bear the Light of the Gospel. Nor could such Works of the Devil endure the Sight of the meanest Christian alive; nay, they complained, that their very dead Bodies had hindred all the influence of their God's from shewing itself. However, both these Methods of opposing Christianity plainly shew, that the Facts, upon which it was founded, were undeniable, and that they had nothing better to say against them, when they took such Courses to defend their own Superstition, as the more antient Philosophers would have been ashamed of.

Thus the wonderful Propagation of Christianity, and the Effects which for a long Time followed it, are a standing Argument of its Truth and Divinity.

I shall now briefly add,

2. The successive Accomplishments of Prophecies deliver'd by Christ and his Apostles.

1. He told his Disciples all the Things that should befall them, and all the mighty Works they should do in his Name.

2. He foretold the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, with abundance of remarkable Circumstances which were to attend it, which are so particular, that whoever compares *Josephus's* History with the Evangelists, must own it for a very signal Evidence of that divine Spirit by which he spake, and of the Truth of his Doctrine.

3. The Dispersion of that People after the Ruin of their City and Government, was likewise plainly foretold, *Luke 21. 24.* And the State of the *Jews* to this Day, is a standing Evidence of the Truth of this Prophecy.

4. The Progress of Christianity, and the State of the Christian Church, was likewise foretold by our Saviour in divers of His Parables, in other express Declarations, as that it should be persecuted at first, and yet it should prevail. That the *Gentiles* should be called into it, and the *Jews*, for a Time, reject it: That in the latter Days there should be Corruptions in the Church, which has been sadly verified.

As for those Prophecies concerning a better State of the Christian Church, the Fulness of the *Gentiles* coming into the Profession of the Gospel, the Conversion of the *Jews*, the destruction of *Antichrist* and others, whose Time of Accomplishment is yet future, tho' we cannot make use of them as Arguments against Unbelievers; yet as those who believe the Scriptures justly expect, that these Prophecies will be all fulfill'd, so when the Time of their fulfilling comes, they will be a successive growing Evidence of the Truth and Divinity of the Christian Doctrine, such as no Imposture can shew.

I come now to consider some of those Prejudices or Grounds of Offence, which some Men take at the Christian Revelation, either upon Account of
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the Person or Doctrine of its Author, and shew the Unreasonableness of them.

1. The mean Condition, and especially the ignominious Death of Christ, has been urged as a great Objection; and it was an Offence at first, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, tho' without Reason. For if the *Jews* would have consulted their own Scriptures, they might have known, that many Prophets were grievously persecuted even to Death, and that those Prophets foretold that the *Messiah* was to be a *Man of Sorrows*, and that his Life was to be *made an Offering for Sin*. This, therefore ought not to have offended them. The *Gentiles* might also have learn'd, from their most esteem'd Philosophers, that outward Pomp and Greatness are rather to be despised than admired by a truly great and wise Man: That no good Man is less beloved of God, for being poor, or put to Death as *Socrates* was. That the most eminent Examples of Virtue, and such as were fittest to teach and reform the World, had been such as were tried in the Furnace of Affliction. That Misery is so far from being inconsistent with the greatest Virtue and Goodness, that according to *Plato's* Reasoning, to make the Character of a truly righteous Man unquestionably perfect, he must be stript of *all Things in the World*. [See *Plato De Repub. Lib. II. p. 261.*] Now, if this be the utmost Pitch of real Virtue, then certainly the suffering State of our Saviour ought to be no Offence to those, who consider him as a Person coming to give the most perfect Example of the most difficult Virtues; and especially one who comes to teach Men to expect another Life after this, in Comparison of which, all the Sufferings of this World would be nothing. For could any State of Life be more proper to teach Men this, than that which he took upon him? or could he more effectually recommend Humility, Patience, Contempt of the World, and Obedience to God's Will, even unto Death,

any other Way than this? If suffering unjustly was that which brought the greatest Glory to the Characters of divers eminent Persons, even in the Pagan World, it ought not by them to have been thought unworthy of God, to *make the Captain of our Salvation perfect thro' Sufferings.*

2. It has likewise been alledged, as a Prejudice against him, that he should promise eternal Life to his Followers, who was not able to save himself from Death. This Objection supposes that he had not Power both to *lay down his own Life*, and to *take it again*; as he declares he had. And that this was true, the raising himself from the Dead is a Demonstration. Now could any Instance be more proper to convince Men that he had Power to raise others than his raising himself from the Dead? This is plain to every Capacity that owns his Resurrection, of which we have such Proof, as makes it impossible for any reasonable Man to deny it. If this voluntary Suffering of Death, therefore, besides the other great Ends of it, carries his Example as far as possible his Resurrection secures us of the Truth of all his Promises. But,

3. Some are offended that he should be declared to be the Son of God. So great a Condescension in God seems to them unbecoming his Majesty. This Prejudice arises from hence, that the Goodness of God in this Dispensation, and his Love to Mankind, is so far above their Comprehension. And yet these very Men would sometimes persuade us to have such an unreasonable Opinion of the divine Goodness, as quite to destroy all Notions of his Justice. They would rather suppose him never capable of being displeased with the greatest Wickedness of Mankind than to be reconcil'd upon such Terms as are above their Comprehension. But now, certainly, tho' no human Understanding was able to find out such a Method of reconciling these Attributes of
God

God to each other, yet being made known to us by God himself, it must appear to all unprejudic'd Men a Method of infinite Wisdom thus to provide an Expiation for the Sins of Men, in a Way satisfactory to his infinite Justice, asserting the Honour of his Laws and declaring his perfect Hatred of Sin; and yet, at the same Time, consistent with an infinite Goodness and Compassion to sinful Men.

This gives us an Assurance of God's Mercy upon true Repentance, and a just Ground of Hope of Forgiveness, thro' the Merits of Christ. Which we could not have had without a Revelation; because, tho' Men should have the highest Thoughts of the divine Goodness, yet considering their own Unworthiness of God's Goodness, by Reason of their great Transgressions, they must have always doubted of it. And much less could they expect an eternal Reward from a Being so much offended. It seems, indeed, to have been a general Notion, of Mankind, that God would admit of some Expiation for Sin, which occasion'd universal Sacrifices; but that any Sacrifice should be a valuable Consideration for this Purpose, cannot be easily conceived. But when we are once assured that God has provided himself with such an all-sufficient Sacrifice, we can then see a Reason why he suffer'd such an Opinion to prevail. And tho' the Christian Method of Redemption argues an infinite Condescension in God, which we could not claim, yet since he takes care of all his Creatures, we ought not to think any rational Creature below his Notice; nor are we to imagine that his Ways of caring for them are only like ours.

4. It is objected, that we cannot comprehend the Manner in which the divine and human Nature are united in the Person of Christ. But, certainly, this ought no more to be a Prejudice against the Belief of it, when it is reveal'd to us, and that Revelation well attested, than the Union of Soul and Body,

tho' we know not the Manner of it, can hinder us from being convinced of the Thing by its Effects.

And that this partaking of the divine and human Nature renders him a proper Mediator with God for Man, cannot reasonably admit of any Dispute.

5. The Time of our Saviour's coming into the World is sometimes objected against, as if it had been too long delay'd. But sure he that sent his Son into the World, for the Salvation of Mankind, and to reveal his Will by him, best knew the proper Time to send him. Not that Men were utterly destitute of the Mercy of God, or of all Means of Salvation, who lived before Christ came in the Flesh, as the Objection must suppose; for the Promise of Salvation is, near upon, as old as the first Transgression; and the Effects of his Propitiation have Respect to Times past as well as future.

The Time also of his Appearance was the fittest upon many Accounts. As for Instance, That it was when Men stood in need of such a Revelation as he came to make, being sunk into the utmost Corruption both of Religion and Morality; when divers other Means of reforming them had quite lost their Effect; when Philosophy confessed itself unable to do it without farther Assistance from Heaven; when the World had been prepared by ancient Prophets, for a long Time, to expect his Coming; and when the outward State of the World was such, as to make his Coming the most beneficial, the Providence of God having disposed all Things for it; so that his Doctrine might have the best Opportunity of being known and examin'd, that Men might not be surprized into it.

6. Not much unlike, to this Objection of Time, is that of the Place or People among whom he appear'd. *Celsus* thought it ridiculous that God should send his Son among the *Jews*, an obscure People. And the like Objection is used by some against any Revelation being at all useful. If it was intended
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for any Good to Men, it ought to have been universal. And this Want of Universality they think to be a sufficient Reason to reject it. But now if this Objection were good, it would prove farther than these Men pretend; it would prove against all the Obligations of natural Religion, which it is certain all Men have not equal Means or Ability of knowing. And the same Way of Arguing would prove that God ought to have made all Men equal in all other Respects, both of Faculties and Improvements, that they might be capable of equal Degrees of Happiness. But as God was not obliged to make all his Creatures of one Rank, so neither was he obliged to make all Men of the same Condition; nor to give them all the same Degree of Happiness, nor afford them the same Means of Knowledge. God was not oblig'd to reveal his Will to all Men. He has indeed been so good as to give them some Means of knowing him, and by that has obliged them to seek after him; and to enquire whether he has reveal'd his Will; and to be ready to embrace it upon good Evidence. And if they do it sincerely, they will either find where that Revelation is, or not be condemn'd for the Want of it.

And then as to the Place where the Gospel first began to be preach'd; why should not *Judea* be that Country, as well as any other? God knows the fittest Place, as well as Time, for opening his Dispensations towards Man; and since he chose this, we should acquiesce in it. Not but that an unprejudiced Man may observe some Reason for the Choice. For in this Place alone, the Knowledge of the true God had been preserved: Here were kept the ancient Oracles of God, and the Writings of the Prophets, which had testified before of his Coming; here therefore were the Evidences kept, whereby it could be proved that he was the Person sent by God. And there was no Occasion, that he should appear bodily in other Nations, since the Truth and

vinity of his Doctrine being once establish'd, the Benefits of it would spread into all Nations. For the Apostles were sent in every Country to convince the *Gentiles* that by *Jesus* Salvation is come to them also, if they will receive it. And it is offer'd to all in such a Way, that they may admit or reject it. Which indeed has been made an Objection against the whole Oeconomy of Man's Salvation: That God did not rather prevent all Sin from entering into the World, or at least, when it was enter'd, rather root it out all at once, than take such a slow Method for the Cure of it. Why was such a Reformation, say they, suffer'd to be necessary? But as this Objection would destroy the original Liberty of human Actions, and take away the Foundation of all Virtue, as well as Vice: So it is not levell'd only against the Wisdom of God in Man's Redemption, but against his Providence in general, of which, in the present Case, I suppose Men to be already convinced; and, therefore, shall not resume the Arguments for it, which are common to all who believe a wise and good Providence governing the World.

But besides the Prejudices which Men take at the Person of Christ, the Time, Place, and Manner of his appearing in the World; they likewise take Offence at his *Doctrine*.

1. It is accused of too great *Plainness* and Simplicity. The *Greeks sought after Wisdom*; they expected Things should be proved to them in a philosophical Way, and deliver'd with all the Advantages of Eloquence; but instead of this, they met with a plain and artless Narration of the Life and Miracles, the Death and Sufferings, and Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, and Directions to obey his Precepts, and to believe in him as the Author of Life, and Judge of the World. This to them *seems Foolishness*: But is not this a Commendation of this Doctrine, that it should prove a Matter of such high Impor-

Importance, by an Argument so level to all Capacities, as that of Christ's Resurrection, for proving the Truth of what he taught. Their Way of teaching, looked as if they thought only Men of Learning worth taking Notice of; but divine Goodness respects not Mens outward Advantages. And tho' the preceptive Part of the Doctrine be plain, yet it is deliver'd in Terms of Authority, giving most excellent Rules of Life, and adding the greatest Sanction to them, by setting before Men the highest Rewards and Punishments. What can be more worthy of God, than a Doctrine so plain, and yet so full and perfect, reaching to the very Intentions of the Heart? And, I am afraid, Men's Prejudice to this Plainness, is, that it awakens their own Consciences against them; that it would be the most effectual Means of reforming them, but that they *hate to be reform'd*.

2. Others object against the Doctrine of Christianity as too sublime, and mysterious: To which I answer, that if a Revelation from God is necessary to reach us any Thing, concerning the divine Nature, more than we could naturally know before, it must, of Necessity, be something which our Reason could not discover; and as far as an infinite Being is concern'd in it, it must exceed our finite Capacities. And yet the Belief of it, when reveal'd, may be very reasonable. And, indeed, it would be a much greater Prejudice against a Revelation's being from God, if it had no Marks in it of any Thing, but what human Reason could have discover'd without it.

3. Some have objected against the Morality of the Christian Doctrine as deficient; that some of the most heroic Virtues, particularly that *private Friendship and Zeal for the Public and our Country, are Virtues purely voluntary in a Christian: They are no essential Parts of his Charity.* By Friendship, they tell us, is not meant that common Benevolence and Charity, which
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every Christian is obliged to shew towards all Men; but that peculiar Relation, which is form'd by Consent and Harmony of Minds, by mutual Esteem, and Tenderness, and Affection, and which we emphatically call *Friendship*. But now, is such a Relation, in itself, abstracted from those mutual good Offices, by which it is cultivated, any Virtue? Surely no more than Brotherhood or Acquaintance, or a Similitude of Studies, which are not always in our Power. But those Offices, which are the Virtues of this Relation, are commanded, by the Christian Law, which obliges us to every Thing that is *virtuous*, and *praise-worthy*, or even of good Report, and to do Good where we hope for no Return, and to perform all Offices of *mutual Affection* and *Benevolence*. And when this happens to be more remarkably done between a few, then it is called *Friendship*. But then it is only limiting those Expressions of Kindness to some Particulars, which the Christian Doctrine commands to every one who is capable of receiving them. There is not any particular Office of this admir'd *Friendship*, but what is more eminently contain'd in St. Paul's Character of *Charity*. And whoever reads the *New Testament* will see, that a Love of our Neighbour comprehends all the Offices of Kindness, which one Man can owe to another in any Relation. A Friendship built upon any, but such Principles, as Christian Charity recommends, is nothing else but a Want of *social Affection* to the rest of Mankind. And the like may be said for the *Love of our Country*, which can never be a Virtue, but when it proceeds upon a Principle of universal Benevolence, and a *Zeal* to do the greatest Good to Men.

4. On the other Hand, some are offended, because the Precepts of the Christian Doctrine are too *severe*. To which, I answer, that they are such as will approve themselves to be just and right to the calmest Reason of Mankind. And there is no Du-
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ty of Life enjoin'd in the Gospel, but what some of the best heathen Philosophers have commended as most noble, and best becoming a virtuous Mind. As to the Obligation of suffering for the Sake of Christ, it is abundantly compensated by the Promise of Grace and Assistance, and by the clear Discovery of a future Reward. This makes it highly reasonable in respect of our Lawgiver, who has provided such a Reward; and it may likewise be the most generous Way of doing Good to Mankind, thus to offer up our Lives to maintain the Truth of that Revelation, which is *so worthy of all Men to be received.*

5. It is farther objected, that the Doctrine of the Gospel has not proved so effectual as it ought to have done, if it had been from God. Christians, say they, are greatly divided; they are corrupt in their Lives, tho' they affirm, it affords much greater Assistances towards Holiness of Life, than any other Institution.

But tho' this is too true, yet, I hope, it is no just Objection against the Truth of that Doctrine which so entirely forbids it. For, if it were, it would be an Objection against all good Doctrine whatever, and even against Reason itself, which all allow is as much contradicted by the vicious Lives of those who profess to be govern'd by it. The Gospel was not intended to force Men to be good, but to give them the best Motives, and then leave them to their Choice. The Gospel had this good Effect upon the Lives of the first Christians, so the like Effect would appear again, if those who believe it, upon a sincere Conviction of its Truth, could be separated from the nominal Professors of it. And even as the Case now stands, if a Christian Country were compar'd with any others, that have never heard of the Name of Christ, an impartial Man would find a very considerable Difference in the Lives and Manners

ners of Men to the Advantage of the Christian Cause, even tho' it were allowed, that the Corruption of Christianity may have made some Men, worse, than they would otherwise have been.

These are some of the Prejudices of Men against the Christian Revelation; and from the Nature of these, we may be able to form a Judgment of the rest, and see that they proceed not from any real Defect in the Gospel, which can make an unprejudiced Man think it less worthy of God: And, therefore, since it has all the Evidence which I have mention'd before, that any Revelation can have, of its being from God, we can have no just Reason to refuse our Assent to it.

Dr.

Dr. JOHN CLARKE's

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

CAUSE and ORIGIN

OF

MORAL EVIL.

WHAT is the *Cause of Evil* is a very important and ancient Question; every Man's Experience of what befalls himself, and a small Observation of the Condition of others, sufficiently teaches him how imperfect Things are, and what Confusion they are liable to. Our natural Powers are very weak; our Understandings are capable of knowing but a few Truths; our Judgment unsettled; and our Practice irregular. And with Respect to our Bodies, the *Materials* they are composed of, the Manner in which they are framed, and the *Laws* they are subject to render them frail, and of short Duration. And the same may be affirm'd of the whole *material World*, which is constantly liable to *Changes and Disorder*. This we observe in
Things

Things consider'd singly in themselves: But if we apply them to each other, the Disorder will appear greater. From the Union of Soul and Body arises War within us. And our Reason and Passions are at continual Discord. To these we may add the *natural Evils* of Life, such as *Pain, Sickness, and Death*. And to compleat the whole, we make take in the *moral Evils*, under which are comprehended all Kinds of *Wickedness*.

Such a Kind of Survey, as this, of the Conditions of Things, hath led Men to enquire into the Cause of them; which has produced different Effects.

Good Men have been shocked with such Observations, and have sometimes complain'd of Providence. (See *Psalms* lxxiii. 16. *Jer.* xii. 1.)

On the other Hand, bad Men have from hence taken Occasion to deny that God either made the World, or has any Hand in the Government of it. [*Lucret. Lib.* II. v. 180, &c. *Dr. Cudworth's Intellectual System*, Page 78. & *Lactan. de Ira Dei. Cap.* 13.]

And that if the divine Providence concern'd itself in the World, it would appear in human Affairs, in protecting the innocent and virtuous, and in discouraging the Wicked; but it does not. And therefore there is no Providence. (See *Cicero. de Nat. Lib.* III. §. 26, 35.) After this Manner have atheistical Men treated this Subject of the *Original of Evil*, so as to collect from the Observation of Facts, either that there is no God, that at first created all Things, or that they are not under his Care.

The *Magians* have been more modest in handling this Subject; they admitted two *Principles* or *Causes* of all Things; the *one good*, and the *other bad*. (*Prideaux's Connect.* Vol. I. Page 169.)

These first *Causes* or *Principles* of *Good* and *Evil* were by the *Persians* called *Oromasdes* and *Arimanius*; by the *Egyptians* *Osiris* and *Typhon*; by the *Chaldeans* good and bad *Planets*; by the *Grecians* *Jupiter*

ter and Pluto; and the good Principle was also called God; and the bad Principle the Devil.

In the third Century, one *Manes*, a *Persian*, introduced this Notion into the Christian Religion, and formed the Sect of the *Manichæans*. (See *Eusebii Eccles. Hist. Lib. VII. Cap. 25. & Socratis Eccles. Hist. Lib. I. Cap. 17. See Bayle, under the Word Manichæans, and under the Word Paulicians.*) Which in the seventh Century was so increased that a 100,000 of them were massacred in *Thrace* and *Bulgaria*. Which did not yet extinguish them; but in Time their Absurdities were so gross, that it came to nothing. But it has been revived by the learned Mr. *Bayle*, (see his *Dictionary under the Word Manichæans*,) who pretends to affirm, that there is no Way of accounting for the present Matters of Fact, and that the *Phænomena* of Nature cannot be explained, but by having Recourse to two necessary, independent, eternal Principles, directly opposite to each other.

Thus we see profane and atheistical Men in every Age employing all their Wit to find out Hypotheses to subvert Religion, and to encourage Men to Iniquity. For to this End all their Discourses tend; either to destroy the Existence of God, or his Providence; or to introduce a Plurality of Gods, whereby all religious Worship is confounded; or else to make God the Author of all Evil, and consequently Men to be mere *Machines*, and so not accountable Creatures; which destroys the essential Difference between Good and Evil, and takes away the Foundation of Rewards and Punishments.

They take Principles for granted, which they cannot prove, nor ought others to allow; and then draw such Conclusions from them as contradict every one's Experience.

In Enquiries of this Nature we ought to consider,
First, The Dignity and Weight of the Subject.
 What Kind of Proofs may be expected, and the
 Manner

Manner in which it ought to be treated. Men's Understanding was given them, that they might search after Truth. And the Creation is a proper Object for them to exercise their Faculties upon. But that which relates more immediately to the Happiness of Mankind should be their *principal* Enquiry, and they should endeavour to gain the greatest Satisfaction in it. The Question before us is of the highest Concern; for if we conceive ourselves to be in a *natural* and *moral* State of *Evil*, and know not what to ascribe it to, or how to get out of it, we shall be much confounded. Hence have arisen the extravagant Opinions of *Fate* and *Chance*; and other numberless incoherent Notions. Hence also have arisen the Worship of dead Heroes; and of mere Names or partial Considerations of the Deity. And from hence Men have been led into all Manner of Profaneness and Wickedness. As therefore we have any Regard for the Honour of God, as we have any Esteem for Virtue and Truth, and as we have any Esteem for our own Happiness, we ought diligently to search into the Cause and Foundation of all the Evils incident to Mankind, that we may know what a Hand we have in bringing them upon ourselves, and how we ought to act under them.

Secondly, In such Enquiries we ought to consider what Kind of Proofs are to be expected. In some Things they are Demonstrations, and in others they are only greater or less Degrees of Probability.

Of Demonstrations there are two Sorts; Demonstrations *à priori*, when we argue from the Cause to the Effect; and *à posteriori*, when we argue from the Effect to the Cause.

Thus when we argue from the Ideas we have of Immensity, Eternity, and necessary Existence, that such Perfections can reside but in one Being, and thence conclude there can be but one God, and therefore it is contradictory to suppose two necessary independent Principles; this is an Argument *à priori*.

Again;

Again; When the *Manichæans* from the many natural Evils which they see in the World, and the many *moral* Wickednesses Men commit, conclude there must be two different Principles from whence these proceed, this is arguing *à posteriori*.

Mr. Bayle says, *That nothing can be more absurd, if we consult our own most clear Ideas, than the Hypothesis of two eternal Principles independent on one another, whereof the one has no Goodness, and puts a Stop to the Designs of the other.* But this seems to be said, because he thinks such Ideas are only mere Imaginations of the Mind, and have nothing to answer to them *without*. And that therefore the certainest Way is to argue *à posteriori*, by explaining the *Phænomena*, and accounting for Facts, which he affirms the *admitting of two Principles does; and, therefore, his Method of arguing exceeds the other, notwithstanding the Beauty of Ideas and Reasons.* Yet the Ideas of Necessity, Unity, Immensity, &c. are as clear, and the Existence of a Being to whom they belong, does as certainly follow, as we are certain of our own Existence, and as we are of those Facts he calls *Phænomena*. So that the Reasoning *a priori*, is, in itself, as strong and conclusive as that *a posteriori*; for by the Observation of the Facts we get an Idea, and from the Nature of the Cause, we judge concerning the Facts.

Lastly, The Manner of treating this Subject, ought to be such as the Dignity of it requires. Such Persons only, who have a Love for Truth, and are diligent in the Pursuit of it, are able to find it out. It is therefore our Part to enquire into the Truth and Reason of Things with Sincerity and Integrity, to lay a Foundation in what cannot deceive us; in the essential Difference betwixt Virtue and Vice, Right and Wrong, Good and Evil; and whatever we build upon this Foundation, will be unshaken by the Attacks of wicked and profane Men.

Had these Rules been observed, there would
 VOL. III. O have

have been no Occasion for inventing absurd Hypotheses to explain any of the Phænomena of Nature. The System of the World may be safely committed to the most curious Examination, without Fear that any Part of it should disgrace the Creator. Nothing more is requir'd, but to judge of it by the unerring Rules of Reason and Knowledge, and the more it is view'd, the more beautiful it will appear. It is for want of understanding the general *Laws*, by which the System of the World is govern'd, that has occasion'd all those Objections against it.

This was the Case of the *Epicureans*, as is manifest by the Instances they gave. Their principal Objection of the Obliquity of the *Ecliptic* to the *Equator*, whereby the torrid *Zone* is rendred too hot, and the frigid *Zone* too cold for Men to inhabit, was owing to their Ignorance of those Places, both which are habitable. And if they had consider'd the Effects of the Position of the *Ecliptic* and *Equator* in any other Obliquity, they would have found greater Inconveniencies arising from the unequal Distribution of Light and Darkness, Heat and Cold: Had the Obliquity been more than it is now, the Heat of the torrid *Zone* had been too great for Plants and Animals under the *Line*; and while the Sun approach'd to one *Pole*, the other would have been left in greater Darkness, and longer cold than now. And had the Obliquity been less, it would have destroy'd the Agreeableness of the different Seasons. If, therefore, we take in the whole Globe of the Earth, and consider it in its present State, we shall find, that the Heat and Light is most equally dispensed that could be. The Instances of the Uselessness of a great Part of the Earth, as *Seas*, *Rocks*, *Heaths*, I shall shew, in its proper Place, to be only the Ignorance of the Objectors. At present this is sufficient to shew how weakly they argued against the Maker and Governor

nor of the World, by first supposing those Things to be *evil or useless* which are of the greatest Benefit, and then unjustly inferring, that they could not be created by a good Being.

Thus it was with the *Epicurean* Atheists of old; and thus it is with those of later Ages. The profane Saying of *Alphonfus*, King of *Leon* and *Castile*, *that had he been with God when he made the World, he could have taught him, how to have made it better*, was owing to his Ignorance of the true System of the World; and has been fully answer'd since to a Demonstration. The *apparent* Motions and Bignesses of the Planets are very different from the *true* ones. Upon the former, the antient Astronomers built their Systems, which are so perplexed and confus'd, that they are scarce intelligible. They observed the Planets sometimes to be nearer, and sometimes farther off, to have different *Phases*, to be sometimes *progressive*, sometimes *stationary*, and sometimes *retrograde*. To solve these, they invented different Hypotheses. Some made the Earth the Centre, and the Sun, and Planets, and fixed Stars revolved round it. Others would have some of the Planets move round the Sun, which should carry them along with it round the Earth. To account for all these *seeming* Irregularities, they were forced to have Recourse to *Excentrics*, *Epicycles*, and *Epicycles upon Epicycles*. And had these been the true System of the World, it would have been difficult to shew the Wisdom or Contrivance of it. For according to them, there was no *Proportion* observed, no Adjustment of the Magnitude, and Distance of the respective Bodies, nor any regular *Curves* in which they moved. Whereas the Distance of all the heavenly Bodies from their *respective* Centers of Gravity, and from the common Centre of Gravity of them all, are exactly in *reciprocal* Proportion to the *Quantity* of Matter contain'd in each of them, whence they are in perfect

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Equilibrium,

Equilibrium, and consequently, by the mere Continuance of the general Laws of Nature, when once put in motion, they will revolve in regular Figures about their Centre of Gravity, and about each other. From hence arise their different Appearances. Thus, when any Planet seems to be *stationary*, or *retrograde*, it does, in Reality, proceed in its Orbit, and it is owing to our Position only, that it appears otherwise, as shall be shewn hereafter. And the several Parts of the *moral* World is as exactly proportion'd to each other, as those of the natural World; and we shall find, that there is no Need of Hypotheses to account for the *Irregularities* and *moral Evils* of Mankind. God will justify himself in this Respect, and that the Wickedness of Men can be no Way charged upon him.

But before I come to explain this in Particulars, I will shew the Weakness of the Hypotheses of two *original* Principles. And this I will do by examining,

First, What Sort of an Idea that is, of an infinite, independent, necessary *evil* Being. And then,

Secondly, I will shew the very Supposition of the Existence of such a Being, is a direct Contradiction to the Existence of an infinite good Being.

1. If there is an *evil Principle*, it must be self-existent, and independent of the *good Principle*: Because, 'tis supposed, that they equally share in the Government of the World, and because, if they were not equal, the Superior would hinder the other from acting. Wherefore, the Defenders of this Scheme are so far consistent as to assert, that the *evil Principle* is infinite and independent. But they do not tell us, what Sort of an Idea that of *infinite Evil* is. All Evil supposes *Understanding*, and *Power*, and *Liberty* of acting, because it is the Consequence, either of the *Neglect* or *Abuse* of one or more of *these*. For in the *Imperfection* or *Want* of them it cannot consist, because an Understanding infinitely *imperfect*, is no *Understanding* at all; and the same may be affirmed of *Power* and *Liberty*.

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Their first Principle, therefore, must be endued with infinite *Knowledge*, and *Power*, and *Liberty* of acting ; and how can this agree to the Notion of an infinite *evil Being*? Can infinite *Knowledge*, *Power*, and *Liberty*, be called evil? With respect to *these*, therefore, absolutely consider'd, such a being cannot be stiled *evil*, because he is endued with such Powers, as are not *evil* in themselves. The *Evil*, therefore, must consist in the *Abuse* of these Powers, which proceeds either in *not* knowing what is best to be done, or in not being *able* to do it, or in having some *Temptation* or *Interest* to the contrary. Let us see how these will agree with an infinitely *evil Principle*. Can we imagine, that infinite *Knowledge* should not be intimately acquainted with the Natures, and Reasons, and Differences of all Things, and what the Consequences and Effects of the divers Applications of them will be, what they are in different Circumstances capable of, and what are the proper Means to obtain their respective Ends? So that in this Particular there is no Room for Evil; for Knowledge and Wisdom are the most perfect in such a Being. If to this we add infinite Power, it cannot be but that the Being in whom these reside, must exercise this Power, according to the unerring Rules of perfect Knowledge.

Again; with Regard to Liberty, there can be nothing from *within*, or from *without*, to induce such a Being to act contrary to Goodness and Truth, no evil Disposition, because the necessary Result of his own Perfections is infinite Happiness to himself, a perfect Rectitude of Will, and consequently no Motive either to make any Creatures that are *evil*, or to commit *Evil* towards them; neither can he have any Temptation from other Beings to do *Evil*, because all such Temptations arise from *Weakness*, or *Depravation*, which are contradictory to All-sufficiency.

Whether, therefore, we consider the *first Principle*,

ciple, with Regard to its *natural*, or *moral* Powers, the Absurdity of its being infinitely *evil* evidently appears.

But that which shews the Absurdity of this Hypothesis still farther, is the impossibility of conceiving two necessary independent Beings at all.

The *Idea* of *Necessity* is an uniform *Idea*, which supposes Unity, Immenfity, Eternity; and if we attempt any Way to diversify it, it immediately vanishes. Thus, for Instance, to suppose *two* necessary, independent Beings, is to suppose *neither* of them to be necessary, because *either* of them being absolutely independent on the other, might have existed without that other, and consequently we can conceive *either* of them to be absent, which is contradictory to the first Supposition of its being necessarily existing.

So also with Regard to the essential Properties of such a Being; for Instance *Immenfity*, the necessary existing Being must be *every where*; for if we can suppose him not to be in any particular Place, we may suppose him not to be *in any*. So as to *Duration*; whatever can be supposed not to exist at any *one* Time, may, by the same Reason, be supposed not to exist *at all*, which is a Contradiction to the Idea of necessary Existence. There can therefore be but one first Cause of all Things, a self-existent, eternal immense, all-wise, all-powerful Being, who is infinitely good and happy.

The World was created at first, and is still govern'd by this Being. So that if we would judge aright concerning any Part of the Creation, we ought to do it by such Rules as are consistent with the known Perfections of the Deity. And since it is demonstrable, that it is the Effect of Wisdom and Goodness, we should endeavour to reconcile it to them. Thus, in the present Enquiry concerning the *Original of Evil*, we ought first to consider, what it is we call *Evil*, which perhaps may be *improperly* so called; whether it does not arise from the Im-

Imperfection of our own Understandings, who presume to condemn what we have not a perfect Knowledge of. To be able to pronounce peremptorily concerning such a System as this, requires us to be every where present in it, to be able to understand and connect every Part of it, and to see the *Fitness* and *Adjustment* of the Whole, which the wisest Men are far from being able to do. But tho' we do not understand the Whole of the Creation, yet we may know enough of it, to judge in general of the Wisdom and Goodness of the Maker and Governor of it, and how we ought to behave towards him and one another. By the little we know, we ought to determine of what we do not know, and not condemn them as useless, because we are ignorant of the *Good* they do. We know that an infinitely wise, and powerful, and good Being, cannot be the Author of any Thing but what is good, that is, fit for the Ends it was designed for; and, therefore, we should not be rash in giving Judgment before we have strictly examin'd Things.

It is, therefore, a very good Argument *a priori*, the Force of which no Fatalist can avoid; that as sure as we are of infinite Intelligence, Power, and Goodness, and that the Universe could not be the Effect of mere Chance, and Necessity, so sure are we, that every Thing created by such a Being, must be worthy of those Perfections, and that all Arguments to the contrary, drawn from the seeming *Evil*, or *Irregularity* of some Parts singly consider'd, are Arguments *ad Ignorantiam*.

But this hinders not, but that we may with Modesty enquire into, and examine those Parts of the Creation, which seem to eclipse the Beauty of it, and we shall find, that such Enquiries will either vindicate the Laws of the Creation, or else convince us, that the Defect lies in our Understandings. Wherefore, before we can pronounce, that any Thing is really *evil*, we ought to consider what we mean by *Evil*, and wherein it consists.

Evil is a relative Term, and either regards the *Being itself*, or it refers to some *other Beings*, with whom it is connected; or else it respects the *Author* by whom it is made. With Regard to the *Being itself*, there is a private *Use*, or *Good*, some *End*, or *Aim* to be served by it. If there be any Thing in such a Being, which is not conducive to this *End*, but, on the contrary, hinders the attaining it, such a *Being* is so far *ill* to itself, is in an uneasy State.

And because no finite Being can exist independent on all others, but there is a Relation which they have to each other, whereby a System is composed, which has a general *End* or *Good* to which every one of the Parts has a natural Tendency in its proper Place; whatever Being disturbs the Order of such a System, that Being is *evil* with respect to *others*.

With Regard to the Author of such a System, it cannot be stiled *evil* in any other Sense, than as it is unworthy of such an Author to create it. For the System is supposed to be as compleat as in the Nature of Things it can be, and to have no Reference to any Thing else; and there is really no such Thing as *Evil* at all *abstractly* consider'd. Having thus shewn what is *evil*, all the *Evils* that are, may be distinguish'd into three Sorts.

First, All *Wants* and *Imperfections* in ourselves, or the Things without us.

Secondly, All *natural Evils*, as *Diseases* and *Death*, which Men and other Creatures are liable to, and Storms and Tempests, &c. in the Things without us. And,

Thirdly, *Moral Evil*.

First, I shall consider those *Wants* and *Imperfections* within ourselves, and show, that there is no just Ground of Complaint in these Respects.

Before we can form any Judgment of the *Perfection* or *Imperfection* of any Part of the Creation, whether *animate* or *inanimate*, we must understand what Powers it is indued with, what Laws it is sub-
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ject to, and what is the Effect of the right Application of them; otherwise, we can have no just Idea of the Being itself, of what Use it is in the World, nor wherein the *Good* or *Evil* of it consists. Thus, if we would judge of the Excellency of the *Planetary System*, we ought to have a particular Knowledge of the Constitution and Laws of it; the Bigness, Distance, and Situation of those Bodies, with respect to one another; the Laws of Motion, and the Curves in which they are directed; from the due comparing of all which, it will be manifest, whether there be any Order observed among them or not. Thus, if we would judge of the Earth, we must be acquainted with its Distance from the Sun, the Obliquity of its Axis to the Plane of the Ecliptic, the Properties of the annual Orb in which it moves, and its Rotation about its own Axis, in order to see the Contrivance of it, by which are produced the several Climates, and the Succession of Day and Night, Summer and Winter, Seed Time and Harvest. And so likewise must we proceed in the Consideration of the particular Parts of it, and its several Inhabitants; particularly of *Man*, who, as he is composed of an immaterial Soul, and a material Body, so it is necessary to have a distinct Knowledge of the Nature and Extent of *these*, and their Influence on each other, before we can tell wherein the *Perfection* of Man consists, or wherein he may be said to be *defective*.

The true Method of such Enquiry is the *Analytic*, which consists in making a great Number of Experiments to enable us to draw some general Conclusion from them. Thus, in the foremention'd Instances, by a large Induction of Particulars, we may proceed from Compounds to the simple Ingredients of which they consist; from considering the particular Motions, to the finding out the Forces that are necessary to generate them, and in general, from the Effects to the Causes; and the more universal

versal Effects are, so much the more universal must the Cause be, till at last it ends in the most general that can be. It is true, this is not a strict Demonstration of the general Conclusion, because that can be had no other Way than by trying all the Experiments that can be possibly made every where, which is endless: But it is the best that the Nature of the Thing is capable of, and ought to be satisfactory, if there be no one Instance found to the contrary. Thus, by Experience, we find all the Parts of Matter we are conversant with, to be *extended, moveable, and impenetrable*; and from hence conclude the same of all the Parts of which the whole Earth is composed; and from thence, by *Analogy*, conclude the same of all Matter in general.

And so likewise of any *particular Law* of Motion that Matter is subject to: We are convinced, by Experiments, that Bodies are *heavy*, or tend towards each other with a certain determinate Force. This appears, from the different Weight of such Bodies; and there being no Instance to the contrary, we infer that this is true in all other Places of the Earth, as well as here. And because it is found to be in certain Proportion to the *Distance* and *Quantity* of Matter, we apply it also to the heavenly Bodies, and lay it down as a *general Law*, that all Bodies *gravitate* towards each other. This is the only Method of coming to the Knowledge of the Nature of Things *à posteriori*, and Observations of the Effects in order to find out some simple and universal Causes or Laws. And then, by Arguments *à priori*, or from such known Causes, to collect particular Effects, in such Cases where we have no Means of making the Experiments.

Contrary to which Method, the ancient *Epicureans* endeavour'd to explain the System of Nature, by Hypotheses which had no Foundation in Nature, nor could be proved by Experimental Philosophy.

The *Peripatetics* attempted to solve the same Phenomena,

nomena, by ascribing, to every *Species* of Things, some specific or *occult Qualities* upon which the Actions of all Bodies depended, in a *Manner* wholly unknown to them; and if any one asked them, what is the Cause of *Gravitation* or *Electricity*, it was thought sufficient to answer, that it arose from the *Nature* or *occult Quality* that lay hid in the Body, without explaining what that *Nature* and *Quality* was, which was nothing else but to amuse, not to instruct Men. Whereas, on the contrary, if from the *Phænomena* we are able to derive some few general Laws or Principles, which are not *hidden*, but obvious *Qualities*, and from these Principles endeavour to explain the Actions and Properties of *corporeal* Things; this is to go in a rational Way, and is the only *one* that can give us any Satisfaction, and by which we can make any Improvement in explaining the Wisdom of the Creation.

Having premised this,

I come now to consider particularly wherein the *Evil* of Imperfection consists; and that in the following Respects;

1. With Regard to *corporeal* Things, and the Laws they are subject to.
2. With regard to *animal* Creatures, and the Powers they are endued with. And,
3. With regard to *Men*, and the Faculties peculiar to them.

Strictly speaking, there can be no such Thing as *Perfection* any where but in God; whenever, therefore we speak of *Perfection* and *Imperfection*, with respect to created Beings, we mean only in a *relative* Sense: So that the *Evil* of *Imperfection* is not properly an *Evil*, but the Consequence of being *finite* and *dependent*.

1. Let us consider the Nature of *material* Things, and the *Laws* they are capable of.

Space is infinite, and therefore necessary: *Matter* is finite, and therefore its Existence depends upon the Will

Will of the supreme Being. For what may be absent from one Place, may be absent from all. And as it does not fill all Space, so it might have been *more or less*, according to the Will of him that created it.

The Existence of *only* this particular Quantity of Matter cannot be called *Evil*, because it is not inconsistent with the Notions we have of infinite *Power* and *Wisdom* to create any of all the possible Things that are the Object of such *Power* and *Wisdom*; and because there is no Objection against this particular Quantity, but what will hold equally against any other Quantity.

The next Thing to be consider'd is the *Powers* or *Qualities* of such *Matter*.

Matter is *passive*, that is, indifferent as to *Rest* or *Motion*.

This *Principle* supposes nothing but *Existence*; nothing more is required than the preserving it in being, and it is a necessary Consequence. But as it could not begin *Motion* itself, some *active* Principle was *necessary* to begin such Motion. And if the Quantity of it varies, or the *Determination* of it be alter'd, such *active Principle* is necessary in order to effect those Changes. Hence it follows, that as *Matter* is capable of all Degrees of Motion, it must be subject to have any *particular Laws* impressed upon it, according to the Will of him who governs it; none of which Laws can properly be stiled Evil.

So likewise when we consider *Matter* as consisting of an infinite Number of distinct Particles, independent of each other; it is manifest that the *Magnitudes*, *Shapes*, *Order*, and *Position* of such Particles, may be different. The Result of which, will be various Compositions arising from such Textures, every *one* of which Compositions was originally intended by the Will of him who formed it; and consequently is merely arbitrary.

Such Considerations will help us to account for the Appearances of the *material* World, and convince

vince us that the supposed *Irregularities* are such Imperfections only, as are essentially in the *Nature* of the Things themselves, and the necessary Result of the Laws they are subject to, as will be plain from a View of them. Space is infinite, capable of receiving numberless *Systems*; but whether all such are actually created, we know not. But concerning this System, we have Means of knowing enough to judge of the Excellency of it. That determinate *Quantity* of *Space* which the heavenly Bodies possess, and that determinate *Quantity* of *Matter* of which they are composed; the *Division* of it into such a particular *Number* of Bodies, the placing them at such *Distances*, and the impressing such *Laws* of Motion upon them, are originally the Effect of Choice, and not of *Necessity*; but as the supreme Being has an absolute Right to create all Sorts of Creatures, and proposes such a *particular* End or *Perfection* in each of them. If every Thing be the most conducive to *that*, 'tis very unreasonable to call it *Ill*, when it is the natural Effect of those Laws which the Things are subject to.

Thus it appears by Observation, that there are but six Planets about the Sun, against which Number there can be no Objection made, but what will affect any other Number. By Observation likewise it appears what particular Laws of Motion they are subject to; against which there can be no Complaint made, but would have been made for the same Reason against any other. So likewise if we suppose any of the Circumstances of this System different, the Effects will be different likewise; and a new Appearance of Things will follow, which in a *comparative* Sense only may be called *better* or *worse*.

Thus to instance in the Earth. The most natural Motion is that of a straight Line; to produce any Degree of which nothing more is required than one single proportionate Impression; and in this State it would, by the mere Laws of Nature, continue
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for ever. But in order to any compound Motion, as that in every *Curve* is; 'tis necessary that in every *Point* of Space, and every *Moment* of Time, a new Direction should be given it, by a continually repeated Impression; according to the Force of which, compared with the *projectile* Motion, and the Direction, will the Kind of the *Curve* be. If the *projectile* Determination be perpendicular to the Distance from the Centre, and the *Velocity* be such, as that the Force, with which the Body would fly off in a straight Line, be equal to that Force with which it tends to the Centre, it would revolve about that Centre in an exact Circle; but if the Position of the *Tangent* be oblique to the *Radius*, it will move in some other Curve, according to the *Degree* of such *Obliquity*, and the *Velocity* given to the projected Body. And hence it is that the Earth moves about the Sun in an *Ellipsis*, of which the Sun is the *Focus*: The necessary Consequence of which is, that the Areas described by it are exactly proportion'd to the Times: That the *Velocity* is greater in some Part of its Orbit than in others, according as the Force with which it tends to the Sun, conspires with or retards the *projectile Force*.

The same may be applied to all the other Planets, and the Irregularities of them will be found to arise from this Principle. They move also about the Sun at such particular Distances, and in such periodical Revolutions, as is best for them; and describe in the same Manner as the Earth, Areas exactly proportioned to the Times. None of which can be stiled *evil*, or *irregular*, when consider'd singly; and when compared together, they are only relatively so; as in the Nature of Things, some must be more excellent than others. There are various Figures in which Bodies are capable of moving; and it seems much more agreeable, that the infinite Wisdom and Power of the Creator, to whom they are all alike possible, should be displayed in making all the Variety

riety that can be, than that he should be confined to some few Particulars.

Having thus consider'd the several Parts of this System singly, and the Laws they are govern'd by, let us now put them together, and examine the Result of such a Composition. It is evident that the Sun was created to communicate Light and Heat. Each of which decreasing as the Squares of the Distances increase; they can be of Use to other Bodies, to a determinate Distance only, in Proportion to their respective Denfities: And hence it is that their Number is limited, and that they extend but to a certain Distance. A luminous and hot Body diffuses its Light and Heat uniformly all round: The most convenient Place for it, therefore, is the Centre; and these being Qualities peculiar to the Sun, it is for this Reason made the Centre of the Planetary System; every Part of which, as it depends upon the Influence of the Sun, so it is proportion'd to it in every Respect.

And this naturally leads us to enquire what that Law in particular is, by which the Planets are thus adjusted, and what the Consequence of it is. There are innumerable Laws in the Nature and Reason of Things, arising from the different Suppositions of several Degrees of Velocity, centripetal Force, and the like, every one of which are equally the Object of the great Creator's *Power*; and it can only be resolved into his *Wisdom* and *Will*, which particular one shall be observed in any System; which when once determin'd whatever is the natural Result of *that*, ought to be esteem'd the Most perfect in tis Kind; and whatever Defects there may seem to be which unavoidably flow from hence, they cannot be properly stiled *Evil* in themselves, but comparatively less *Good*. Thus that Law of Motion which obtains amongst all the great Bodies throughout this System is necessary under the present Circumstances of the Creation, to preserve
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that Order and Harmony which is now established in it; but originally it might have been otherwise; and if God had pleased to have impressed other Laws on this System, the Result would have been only different Appearances, and different Effects from what we now experience; but abstractedly considered, they had been equally *good*, and with Respect to the infinite Creator of all Things, equally the Object of his Wisdom and Power.

Having thus consider'd the natural Imperfections which are inherent in the greater Bodies of this System, let us next consider the several Parts of which our Earth is composed, and the Manner we are affected by them, that we may see from whence all those *natural Evils* arise that are so much complained of.

The dividing the Light from the Darkness, in the Manner it now is, has been objected against, as unequal with Respect to the several Parts of the Earth. The gathering of the Waters unto one Place, which caused the *Earth* and *Sea*, is also attended with many *Inconveniences*. The too great Quantity of Waters is complain'd of in some Places and a Scarcity in others. The Saltness also of the Sea is objected against, and its Liableness to drown Countries. The Air also is subject to Storms and Tempests, which are often fatal to Men, and other Creatures; and many Times is so infected, as to produce Plagues and Famines. Many Herbs and Trees are said to be poisonous.

And as the *inanimate* Part of the Creation is thus liable to Disorder, the *animate* Part is subject to much greater *Evils*. The Weakest and most Defenceless of which, in every Element, are a Prey to the Strongest; and many of them pernicious to Mankind.

But the greatest of all Evils Man is subject to, he is not only liable to *Pain*, *Diseases*, and *Death*, in common

common with other animal Creatures; but his Reason and Liberty have subjected him to all Kinds of Sin, which have brought greater Calamities upon him, than all the natural Causes put together. This is the Division of the several Parts of this lower World; and notwithstanding the foremention'd Objections, I shall shew that whatsoever Defects or Abuses they are subject to, they are upon the Whole sufficiently compensated by that general *Fitness* they have to obtain the End proposed by them.

That God proposed certain Ends to every Thing he made, is evident. For no Man can be so void of Reason as to think that his Eye was not made to see with; and the same may be said to every Particular throughout the whole Creation. Whence it seems highly probable that God created just such a Quantity of Matter, as is proportioned to the Space in which it was to move: That the *original* Particles of this Matter are *solid, impenetrable, and very lasting*; that they are of a particular Bigness and Figure, and endued with particular Laws of Motion: From the various *Texture and Composition* of which arise those different Sorts of Bodies, of which this World is constituted. The *Variety* of *these* is infinite, and all possible Varieties of them the Object of infinite Power. It belongs therefore to Wisdom and Knowledge to determine *which* shall actually exist, and *which* will best serve the Ends and Purposes of the Creator: And to us they can only be known by Experience. From whence we collect, that the original Particles of Matter are perfectly solid, not to be worn, or broken into smaller Pieces, by any Force in Nature; because if *these* could undergo any Alteration, the whole Nature of Things would immediately be changed. Thus if we conceive the *Earth* or *Water*, as it now is, to be form'd of such Particles as are before described, and that the Differences of those Bodies are owing to the different *Texture and Composition*

of such Particles ; if *these* could be lessen'd, the Result must be another Sort of Earth and Water from what we behold, and such as may exist in other Parts of the Universe. As to the particular Figure of these Particles, we cannot know them, by Reason of their Smallness. But some general Laws which they are subject to, we can by observation arrive at, and these will discover to us the wonderful Contrivance of their various Compositions, and will help us to account for the *Irregularities* and *Imperfections* which are objected against them.

The Principal of these Laws are *Gravitation*, *Cohæson*, and *Fermentation* ; by which Words we do not mean to explain the Causes, but only to signify particular Kinds of Motions or *Tendencies*, whatever Causes they are owing to. Thus, by *Gravitation* is meant that *Tendency*, which all Bodies have mutually and equally towards each other ; so by *Cohæson* is meant another Sort of *Tendency*, whereby the smaller Parts of all solid Bodies, when they come within a certain Distance, or perhaps touch each other in some Points, are strongly united together. And by *Fermentation* is meant that contrary *Tendency* which is in the Particles of fluid Bodies to recede, and fly off from each other, with certain Degrees of Velocity not yet exactly determin'd ; tho' by its regular Effects in *emitting*, *reflecting*, and *inflecting* the Rays of Light, and in producing *Air* and *Vapours*, it appears that the Cause of these must be regular, and act uniformly. These, and such like particular Kinds of Motion, impressed on the original Particles of Matter, are the universal Laws of Nature, by which every Thing is form'd ; and by which the present Phænomena can be explained.

That there should be only three or four such universal Principles from whence the whole Phænomena of Nature arise, can be ascribed only to the mere Will of him who created them ; and might have

have been more or less, and different in Kind and Degree, if he had pleased. *These* that we experience are admirably suited for the Purposes they were designed, and if at any Time they fail of attaining them, it is only thro' such *Imperfection* as in the Nature of Things they must be subject to, and which could not be prevented but by changing their Properties.

Thus, by the natural Consequence of *Gravitation*, the whole Earth is compacted into a Globe, the lighter Parts giving Way to the heavier, till they are all exactly balanced. And this is the most convenient Form for turning about its own Axis; that every Part might have its Proportion of the Sun's Heat and Light. And this affords also the largest and most regular Surface for the Inhabitants. But this Form must necessarily be a little alter'd by the Earth's diurnal Motion, for thereby the Parts of the Earth about the Equator, moving so much swifter than those towards the Poles, must, by their Endeavour to fly off in straight Lines, diminish the Force of Gravity, and consequently those Parts must be higher. And if it was not thus, the Sea would sink at the Poles, and rise at the Equator, and overflow all the Places about it. By this Force also Things are retain'd upon the Superficies of the Earth, and all Kinds of Animals are capable of moving upon it, and all Bodies acquire Motion by falling.

By the Principle of *Cohæsion*, which is superior to that of *Gravity*, the original Particles of Matter are united together, so as by their various Texture and Composition to form those Bodies, which we observe in Nature, the several Kinds of Fluids and Solids.

By *Fermentation*, Heat and Life are preserved, the Sun itself is nourished. All Generation and Vegetation is owing to *this*: The Juices in Plants, and the Blood in Animals, are kept in perpetual Heat and Motion thereby. So that without these Prin-

ciples of Motion the World would be a Lump of useless Matter; the Earth and Planets would be involved in everlasting Cold and Darkness, and all the Species of Creatures immediately die.

Having described the Nature and Effect of the Chief of those Laws by which Things are at present regulated; by a particular Application of them we shall be able to answer the foremention'd Objections, against the Perfection of the present State of the Creation.

The unequal Division of Day and Night, and the Uses thereof, have been already consider'd.

The next Thing objected to, is, the unequal Division of Land and Water, but without the least Foundation of Reason or Experience; for the Seas are no bigger than is requisite to preserve the present Constitution of the Earth. Water is necessary towards the Support of Animals and Plants, and, therefore, ought to be distributed in every Part of the Earth. The Sun, by his Heat, causes the Water, which is impregnated with nutritious Particles, to rise up into Vapours in so great a Quantity, as make thick Clouds, which are disperfed about by the Winds, and fall down into Rain, which makes the Earth fruitful; or else the Vapours are condensed into Cold on the Tops of Mountains, and by that Means produce Fountains and Rivers of Water, for the Uses of Life; and as there is this Reason for so great a Quantity, so there is also as good a Reason for that particular Quality, its *saltness*. Fresh Water, if not continually in Motion, stinks. But as the Waters of the Sea cannot have so swift a Current, by reason of its Largeness, to compensate this Want of Motion, the Waters were made salt, which produces the same Effect as Motion would do, and is separated from it, when it rises into Vapours. Thus we see, by this single Instance, what a wrong Judgment Men are apt to make, when they view Things in one Light, and thence proceed

ceed to condemn them. Had the Quantity of the Water of the Sea been less, it would not have afforded us Rain sufficient for the whole Earth; and if there had been more, it would have rendered a great Part of the Earth useless. And the same may be affirmed of the other Circumstances of it. It was not intended for Men or Animals to drink, the Rivers being sufficient for that Purpose, and it is proper for the Fishes in it; and, therefore, its *saltness* is no Objection against it. And as to its Inundations, if we consider how seldom they happen, what a Complication of Causes they are owing to, they will not hinder us from thinking, that God has said to the Sea, *Move no further*.

Of the same Kind is the Objection drawn from the Inequality of the Earth's Surface, consisting of Mountains, Vallies, and Plains, every one of which have their *Inconveniencies*; but much greater would follow, if it were otherwise. The highest Mountains bear but a very small Proportion to the Earth's *Diameter*, by which they ought to be estimated. But if the Superficies of the Earth was exactly level, the Water, which is highest, would cover the Earth: This Inequality was therefore necessary. Besides, the finest Fruits grow on the Sides of Mountains, and their Bowels contain useful Minerals. Burning Mountains, indeed, are dangerous and destructive; the Cause of which is to be ascribed to the Principle of *Fermentation*, and is the natural Result of it. And were this removed, a much greater Evil would unavoidably follow; for it is observed, that those Parts of the Earth abound very much with Sulphur, and Salts, and Minerals, all which are necessary to the Uses of Life; for these, by mixing together, first grow warm, as in Baths, and in other Places, extream hot, and at last take Fire, and by their sudden Expansion either cause Earthquakes, or form burning Mountains. And this seems to be the Original of them, and that Method,

by which in the present Course of Things such *fermenting* Particles are dissipated thro' the Air, in order to produce the Effects design'd by them : For most very high Mountains are observed to have Ashes on, or near the Top, which looks as if they were generated this Way. If, therefore, we consider the universal Use the Materials are of, which spring from this Fountain, we shall be so far from thinking them *evil* to Men, or other Creatures, that, on the contrary, such *Evil* is only partial and accidental, and the least that in the Nature of the Thing can be, and the *Good*, on the other Hand, the greatest.

The remaining Part of this Objection relates to barren Heaths, and large Deserts, which seem to arise partly from the voluntary Neglect of Men, who have not cultivated them as they ought ; or by Wars have depopulated and rendred barren *those*, which by Nature were fertile ; or partly from the Imperfection of the present Course of Things. For Moisture is absolutely necessary to the producing all kinds of Vegetables, which, upon their Dissolution, are in great Part reduced into dry Earth ; whence it follows, that the Moisture of the Earth must continually decrease, and unless supply'd from some other Cause, must in Time totally fail. It is, therefore, no Wonder, if from all these Causes put together, it appears, that what was once fertile, is now barren, and where formerly a powerful Nation dwelt, we now behold nothing but Sand and Desert. The Surface of the Earth is naturally subject to such *Evils*.

And if we proceed from hence to the Air, we shall find, that this also has its Inconveniencies and Irregularities. From hence come Storms and Tempests, Thundrings and Lightnings, Plagues and Famines. And here also we ought to consider, what is the natural Result of the Constitution of the Air, how universally beneficial it is ; whether such Phænomena do not proceed from some particular Circumstances of it ; whether they may not be of some Use ;

Use; or whether the preventing them would not be of worse Consequence; and how much of this Inconvenience may be owing to Men's Neglect or Abuse.

1. What is the natural Constitution of the Air.

That Air is not by any Means to be made visible appears from hence, that let it be never so much condensed, there is no Difference in the Transparency. But tho' we cannot come to the Knowledge of its Laws by Sight, yet, by Experiments, the general Nature of it is made manifest, and which will account for the principal Effects of it.

The peculiar Property of Air is *Elasticity*, that Power by which the Parts endeavour to recede from one another, and to expand themselves all around, so as to possess any given Space; the Degree of which is found by the Force that is requir'd to compress its Action and Reaction, being always equal to each other. This also is a certain Law by which the invisible Particles of the Air are govern'd. And by considering what the Consequence of such a particular Motion is, we shall see both the Benefits and Disadvantages it must be liable to. Tho' this Elasticity be the peculiar Quality which belongs to it, as *Air*, yet it is also subject to the universal Law of Gravitation, and 'tis no Way inconsistent with it; this latter always respecting the Centre of the Earth, and the *other* respecting only the Particles themselves. And to the Composition of these two Motions, is owing that particular Density of the Air near the Surface of the Earth, which is necessary for the Subsistence of Men and Animals. And were the Particles of Air void of Gravitation, they would immediately fly off the Surface of the Earth, and be entirely dissipated; and were they void of Elasticity, they would subside to the Surface of the Earth. But the Quantity of Air being exactly adjusted to this *expanding* Force, so that the incumbent Weight might compress it

to a due Density, renders it fit for all the Uses of Life. That this is the general Constitution of the Air, is confirmed by undeniable Experiments.

I come now to the particular Uses of this Element.

By the Smallness of its Particles, and their regular Distance, the Air is rendred a transparent *Medium*, which, was it not so, every Creature would be blind. By the *Elasticity* of these Particles, the Air is rendred proper for Creatures to move in most freely; for, by this Means, it will easily yield to any Force, and by such yielding have its Parts freely moved among one another; but by its Reaction, the incumbent Weight is so far taken off, that they can, with little Resistance, move swift enough for all the Purposes of Life. From the same Principle arises *Sound*, which is nothing else but the Effect of different Vibrations of the Air striking upon the Organs of Hearing, which gives us the Pleasure of Musick, and Conversation. To *this* also is owing that Kind of Motion, which we call *Wind*, so necessary towards tempering and mixing the Particles interspers'd in the Air, towards conveying the Clouds, and cooling the hotter Climates. And without *this*, we could have no Navigation: But the principal Use of all is Respiration, which is absolutely necessary to the Preservation of Life, both *animal* and *vegetative*. For the Particles of Air insinuate themselves not only into the Vessels, but mix with the Juices contain'd in them, whence, thro' the equal Pressure on all Sides, the distractile Vessels are capable of being contracted and dilated with Ease by the *vital* Power, so as to inspire or expire a sufficient Quantity of Air to carry on the Circulation. That this Air is impregnated with *acid* Particles, is evident; the Nature of which Particles we judge by the Effect. Thus, that they are the Cause of *Fermentation*, is evident from hence, that a common Fire is much increased by blowing
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or mixing a great Quantity of Air with it. From whence it follows, that these Particles must be pretty gross, and endued with a strong attractive Force, when they come near one another; by which Force, when they rush into any Fluid, they agitate the Parts of it, which causes *Heat*; or separate them with great Violence, in which consists *Fermentation*. And thus the Pulse of the Heart, and the Circulation of Juices is preserved by Respiration; for, upon dilating the Lungs, a great Quantity of Air is received in, which carries along with it those nitrous acid Particles with which it abounds; which being thus conveyed into the small distended Vessels, mix with the Fluids contain'd in them, and by *fermenting* there, cause such a gentle Heat and Motion, as is necessary to preserve Life.

These are the principal Laws by which this Medium is govern'd, which were necessary to mention, in order to account for those *Irregularities*, which by this Means it must be liable to, and which, compar'd with the general *Usefulness* of it, will be found to be no just Objection against it. That the Air is supply'd with nitrous and sulphurous Particles from the internal Parts of the Earth, appears from the Quantity of them that discover themselves in burning Mountains, and hot Fountains. And upon their mixing with Minerals, a *Fermentation* is immediately rais'd, which dissipates them so, that they are exhaled along with the watry Vapours, and driven by the Winds about, till the whole Atmosphere is impregnated with them. And under some Circumstances these *Fermentations* must cause great Mischiefs.

Thus, when these *Fermentations* are made in subterraneous Caverns, that are not wide enough for the Particles to expand themselves in, or have no open Passage to rush out, they cause Earthquakes, and tear those Caverns in Pieces.

If it happens, that these *Fermentations* are under the Sea, the Water mixing with these Materials increases

creases their Force, and is thrown back up into the Clouds, and sometimes falls down in whole Spouts, which are sufficient to drown all that is near them.

If the *Fermentation* be not so violent, it only raises Vapours, which find their Way thro' occult Passages of the Earth. *These*, near its Surface, by their continual Expirations, are, at first, the Cause of gentle Winds; and these afterwards, by their continual Increase, become Tempests and Whirlwinds.

But if they be more gentle, they then ascend along with the lighter Vapours into the upper Region of the Air, and when a Quantity of them is gather'd together, they ferment with the acid Nitre, and taking Fire, cause Thunder and Lightning.

This is the Origin of those *Imperfections* and *Evils*, which the present Constitution of the Air, and the Laws of Motion observed by those Particles mixed with it, subject it to; and without altering the primary Laws of it, it is impossible to prevent them. And if we add to this, that these *Evils* are the fewest that could be, without hindering a much greater *Good*, and there are good Uses to be made of them, we have no Reason to complain of them.

Were there less Sulphur and Nitre, the Ground would grow barren, and the Plants and Animals would die. And if there were a much greater Quantity, the Earth would be too fat, and the Plants and Animals would be chok'd. Those Vapours which cause Thunder and Lightning, are, by their Levity, conveyed to the highest Part of the Atmosphere, where their Explosion being capable of any Direction, it seldom comes *perpendicular* on the Earth, and more seldom reaches it, by reason of the Density of the Air near its Surface. And were these Vapours not to be discharged in this manner, the Air would be so fill'd with them, as to be pernicious; they, therefore, are of Use to purify it.

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Were there no Storms, the Earth would stagnate and corrupt; so they are necessary to agitate its Particles, and give them a due Mixture.

So likewise concerning Vulcano's; they are of Use to generate Mountains and Islands, and to enrich the Countries round about them. Thus we see these Evils are not inconsistent with what *Moses* pronounces concerning God's Works, that they *are very good*.

As to Plagues and Famines; *these* may partly be ascribed to the natural *Imperfections* of Things, and partly to the voluntary Neglect of Men. A due Temperature of the Air is necessary to Vegetation and Respiration: If the Air abounds with too many nitrous and sulphurous Particles, the *Fermentation* will be too great, so as to accelerate the Juices, and distend the Vessels more than is proper for the Nourishment of Plants and Animals; or if it be more violent, it tears them to Pieces; on the other Hand, the Air may want a due Quantity of such Particles, and then the *Fermentation* will not be great enough, and the Juices at last may stagnate: In either of which Cases, Diseases and Death will follow. And these Evils come to pass by the foremention'd Laws: For at the first Eruption of such Vapours, the adjacent Places must be too plentifully stock'd with them, so as by their excessive Heat to destroy the Products of the Earth, and afterwards, by continually decreasing, the very same Places may be come barren and desolate.

But this may be ascribed to the voluntary Neglect of Men. In desert Countries, where the Land is uncultivated, and the Waters permitted to stagnate, and where large Woods, which the Winds cannot penetrate, make the Air stagnate also; the Earth sends forth corrupted Vapours, which being carried by the Wind, infect the neighbouring Nations. And in very populous and close Cities, the contrary Effect is produced for want of a due Circulation

culatation of the Air, and for want of its being sufficiently impregnated with *fermenting* Particles. Whence 'tis observed, that such Distempers are for the most Part generated in one or other of these extreamly different Places.

Having consider'd the Nature and Effects of the Air, I come next to Herbs and Plants.

'Tis objected, that many of these are *noxious* and *poisonous*. But we are to consider, that as Corn and other Grain were design'd for the Use of Man, and are the most agreeable Food to them, so God has supplied other Creatures with their proper Sustainance. Hence it follows, that what is Food for one Animal, is Poison to another, because its Stomach may not be able to digest it, or it may do it in such a Manner, as to cause a Fermentation too strong, or too weak for the Vessels in which the Juices are contain'd. There is no Fault in the Things themselves; for the same Plant, which in some Respects is stiled *poisonous*, is in other Respects and Circumstances very useful.

Before we pronounce concerning the *Good* or *Evil* of such Products of the Earth, we ought to find out what are the Uses of them. Now, in those that we do know, they appear sufficiently to answer the Design of the great Creator, and are, therefore, *good*; so ought we to conclude, that those, which we do not know, are *good* likewise.

Thus we have gone thro' the *inanimate* Part of the Creation; let us come now to the *Animal* Part, and see if the Objections against that be any stronger than the other. Under this Head come in not only Men, but all Animal Creatures, because the Objections against them affect them all equally, *viz.* that they are subject to *Pain*, *Misery*, and *Death*.

In order to account for these *Evils*, it is necessary to consider the Materials of which the Bodies of Men, and all other Animals, are originally composed, the Frame and Structure of them, the Powers and Qualities they are endued with, that

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we may be able to form a true Judgment of them, and see what is reasonable to be expected from such a Constitution, either as to its Duration, or the Effects which may be produced in it, from Things *without*, or *within* itself.

The *Matter*, of which the Body is made, is the Dust of the Earth; therefore it must be capable of being resolved into its original constituent Particles; because whatever the Composition be, it can be only the Result of the different Texture of such Particles, which Texture may be destroyed by any Power superior to those Laws, by which it is regulated. For if we observe the Course of Nature, we shall find that throughout the whole Creation this is the Method in which every Thing goes, from the lowest to the highest; they are converted and transform'd from one Species to another, and return to their Original again. Thus, in the *inanimate* Part, dense Bodies, by Rarefaction, are turned into Air; and this Air, by Fermentation, returns back into dense Bodies. In the vegetative Part, Plants and Herbs grow out of watry Juices, and by Putrefaction return to those Juices again. And human Bodies, as well as those of Animals and Plants, are compounded of very different Materials, *fixed* and *volatile*, *fluid* and *solid*, as appears by the Resolution of them into their constituent Parts, and they are nourish'd by *Attraction*; [see *Newt. Optic.* Page 398.] So long therefore as the Nourishment is proper to assimilate itself to the several Parts of the Body, as it approaches them in its several Channels; or so long as the solid Particles retain their Form and Texture, so long Life is preserved. And when the Nourishment becomes unfit to assimilate, or the *saline* Particles lose their Power of Attraction, either by being divided into still less Particles; or else by having those watry Parts violently separated from them; in either of these Cases their Motion will cease, and end in Corruption and Death. And this appears,
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in that every Thing that is corrupted is of a black Colour, which shows that the component Particles are broken to Pieces, and reduced so small, as to be unable even to reflect the Rays of Light.

Thus we see that *Death* is the necessary Consequence of those Laws by which the Body is framed, and therefore is not properly an *Evil*.

And to the same Origin are to be ascribed all the *Diseases* and *Distempers*, to which Men and *Animals* are incident. For if the *Whole* be liable to Corruption and Dissolution, the several Parts of which it is composed, must necessarily be so too. And if a particular Order or Disposition of those Parts be requisite to preserve Health, whatever disturbs that Order immediately creates a Distemper. The different Parts of the Body must therefore be liable to as many *Diseases*, as there are Means of preventing or disturbing their regular Course.

Under this Head may be included Monsters, or deformed Creatures. It appears, that in their Origin, all Animals are perfect, and the Individuals of every *Species* folded up exactly in the same Manner: So that if in the *Explication* of them, any of the Parts be, by a superior Force, hindred from extending themselves to a due Shape, or if they be any Way blended or confounded with each other; then, of Consequence, they must either *want*, or *abound* in some Part or other. But this seldom happens, and there is all the Provision made against it, that the Composition of animal Bodies would allow, it is therefore no just Objection against them.

But the Aggravation of all these natural *Evils*, such as Diseases and Death itself, is, that for the most Part they are attended with *Pain*.

What the Cause of this is in general, is, that Men are endued with Sensation, or a Power of Feeling. That Sort of Life, which Man was intended to lead here on Earth, manifestly requires that he should be endued with a Body proper to perform

form the respective Offices in. Now whatever Materials we suppose this Body composed of, it must be liable to the common Laws which the whole material Part of the Creation is subject to; and, consequently, will stand in Need of Repair both in the Solids and Fluids, which they must perpetually meet with. *These* it is necessary should be signified by some Means or other; and we cannot conceive how this could be done better, than by those different Kinds of Pain and Uneasiness that are excited by the Disorders that the several Parts of the Body are subject to. And this is the Foundation of all those Affections and Passions usually ascribed to the Body, which are but so many Sorts of Pain.

Thus Hunger and Weariness put Men upon seeking after Food and Rest, without which they would continue but a little while; and which they would have no Disposition to, if they were not signified to them in some such Manner as this; and the same holds true of all other bodily Appetites and Desires. And hence, I suppose, it is, that the external and superficial Parts of the Body are the most sensible, and create the greatest Pain, when they are affected. Because *these* are continually exposed to the various external Objects; and as soon as they are affected by them, give us immediate Notice of it. Whereas the internal Parts, being more remote, cannot be so easily come at, and consequently are not liable to so many Interruptions from the Things without, and therefore need not such quick Sensation. Thus we experience that the Arteries and Bones have little or no Sensation. This therefore is a weak Objection against the present State and Condition of Mankind, and other Animals, that they are liable to Pains and Uneasiness: By the same Argument there should have been nothing but Stocks and Stones, for upon the Supposition of any Degree of Sensation, a proportional Degree of Pain follows upon any Excess or Defect whatsoever.

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The Fault therefore lies not in the Nature and Constitution of animal Bodies; they are in their respective Kinds the most perfect that can be; the Degrees of Sensation, they are endued with, are exactly proportion'd to that Sort of Life, which they were intended to lead, and to the Duration of it; and the best Provision, that could be under such Circumstances, is made against all Accidents; and a greater or a less Degree would have produced much worse Inconveniencies, as sufficiently appears by what the Effect of Art or Abuse is. Neither is it any just Ground of Complaint, that there may be some particular Instances, which consider'd by themselves, may seem very extream and difficult. We ought to form our Judgment not from such single Instances, which are very complex, but from a general View of the Whole: And then the Wisdom and Goodness is plain in this and all other Respects.

Having thus examin'd the *Imperfections* and *Evils* that arise to such Creatures from their own internal Frame and Composition, and the Application of such Means as are necessary for their Preservation and Sustainance; I come now to consider them *relatively*, their Dispositions and Affections towards each other, and what the Result of them are. For against *these* 'tis objected, that several Species of Creatures live upon one another.

I shall endeavour to account for this Difficulty, as far as we have Means of coming to the Knowledge of the particular Circumstances relating to it. And, *first*, with respect to Man, and the Right he has of eating such Creatures as afford Food to him. Man's Superiority over other Creatures seems to be a Foundation in Nature for some Authority over them, *viz.* to make Use of them to such Purposes, as by their Frames, they seem particularly to be calculated for. And this is confirm'd by Scripture, *Gen. i. 28.* Which Grant, tho' it may not extend

extend to the Life of the Creature, implies all other Uses whatsoever.

But in the Blessing which God gave to *Noah* after the Flood, he permitted them to kill living Creatures for Food, (see *Gen. ix. 1, 2, 3.*) only with this Limitation of not eating the Blood. But *Flesh, with the Life thereof, which is the Blood thereof, you shall not eat.* Which Words being often repeated, and great Stress laid upon them, shew that they are very material, and if rightly understood, will help to resolve the foremention'd Difficulty.

In general, that the Flesh of some Animals is proper Food for others is evident by Experience; and irrational Creatures falling into it by mere Instinct; and the universal Practice of Mankind in every Age and Place, where there are no Footsteps of divine Revelation, recommending it, shews, that in the Nature of Things, there is no Contrariety in such Application. Whatever Objection lies against it, must relate to the Manner and Circumstances of doing it. And the Principal of these are, the depriving the Creature of Life, and of all that Pleasure it was capable of enjoying; and also the putting it to Pain. In order to answer these Particulars, it will be necessary to consider the following Things.

1. That whatever Right Man is supposed to have over inferior Creatures to apply them to his Use, it is certain he can have no Right to abuse them; and therefore Cruelty is unjust. And to prevent any Cruelty in Men, who are allow'd to feed upon proper Animals, I take the Caution added in the forecited Words: *But the Flesh, with the Life thereof, which is the Blood thereof, shall you not eat.* Which is afterwards repeated with regard to the *Jewish* Sacrifices, *Deut. ix. 16.* And in whatsoever Sense the original Sense of the Words be taken, they were intended to prevent all Cruelty towards brute Creatures; and to put them, when we kill them, to the least Pain possible. In this View Men's killing li-

ving Creatures for Food, or such Creatures killing one another, carries no moral Turpitude in it: It is of the same Kind with all other *natural Evils*, and the Effect of the present State of Things.

Thus they were made *mortal*, and the *Materials* of which they are formed render them liable to many Diseases from *within*, and Dangers from *without*; which may destroy them sooner than the common Period of their Lives. Since therefore they must die, and this Manner of Dying is not attended with any greater Evil, nay not so much as dying by any Distemper, it may be reckon'd among their common Diseases. And there is no more Reason to complain of the one than of the other.

2. That there is nothing particular in *this* will appear, if we consider, that 'tis the Circumstances of Dying that aggravate the Evils of it.

We are apt to think that such Creatures have the same Notions of Death that we have, and that it is as terrible to them. Whereas 'tis the Consciousness of not having acted according to the Laws of Justice and Truth, and of being punish'd by God for it, in a future State, that makes Men afraid to die. But as these Animals are not accountable Creatures, and seem to have no Apprehensions but what are raised by present Objects, the foremention'd Aggravations of Death are taken away, and there remains no more Evil in it than the bare Pain, which is much less than in any common Distemper.

3. The State of such Animals is upon the Whole better'd, by being Food for Men. They enjoy all the Pleasures they are capable of; and feel no Hardships for Want of Sustenance, which Creatures, left to themselves, labour under; and were they permitted to continue on, till the natural Periods of their Lives were finished, it would be but a little Time; and their Senses would grow dull, and their Appetites fail them. Wherefore if we put the *Good* they are deprived of, into the Balance with *that*, which

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is voluntarily conferr'd upon them, they enjoy more of the Pleasures of Life than they would otherwise do, and they have no Right to the Labour of Men, if they afford them no Advantage by it.

And if we compare the Circumstances of these Creatures in the worst Light, and compare them with other still inferior Animals, they are in a much better State than many of them. The two chief Properties of Life, are the Degree of Enjoyment, and the Length of Duration. Some Animals are made to last many Years; others but a few Days or Hours. The Enjoyment of some is but one Degree above Vegetables; others have great Pleasure. Compar'd with *these*, the Life of the foremention'd Animals is much preferable, and the *Evil* of their being killed, is compensated by the greater *Good* they are upon the Whole possess'd of; their Lives might have been as short, and their Senses as dull, as the inferior Animals. As they had not Title to Existence, so there is no Reason to complain, that one possesses more of that, which none originally had any Title to.

According to this Rule, there could have been no Diversity of animal Creatures, because, when compar'd together, the State of some must be *better* than that of others. Which Objection overthrows not only the present Creation, but all Possibility of creating any finite Beings whatsoever; because they will in their Proportion have their Defects, when compar'd with that which is infinitely perfect. It is therefore much more agreeable to Wisdom, that there should be, as in the *material*, so in the animal World, all possible Degrees, and Kinds, which are superior to Non-existence; and so Experience and Matter of Fact plainly shew that there are.

4. If we consider, that by *Animals* living one upon another, there is the more Good upon the Whole. For under the present Circumstances of the Creation, Animals living in this Manner one upon ano-

ther, could not be prevented, but a greater Evil would have follow'd: For then there could not have been so great a Number or Variety of Animals as now; some of which are so small, and the Quantity such, that by mixing themselves with Herbs and Plants, and Grain, which they feed on, and with the Water which they drink, must be necessarily devour'd by larger Animals, without being perceived by them. It is therefore much better that they should live as they do now, than not live at all: For if animal Life is better than Non-existence, or a vegetable Life, and the more there is of such animal Life, the more *Good* there is in the World, 'tis evident, that by this Means, there is Room for more whole Species of Creatures, at least, for more Individuals of each Species, than there would be otherwise. And hereby the Goodness of God is display'd. For the Constitution of animal Bodies is such, as requires that they should be maintain'd by Food: Now if this Food can be made capable of animal Life also, it is a greater Improvement of it, and tho' it be in a lower Degree, and the Enjoyment of Life in such Creatures less, yet it is more than unform'd Clay, or even the most curious Plant.

Besides, the permitting such Creatures to increase, would be of very ill Consequence. We should quickly be overstock'd with them; those which are now tame would grow wild and mischievous; and the Plants and Fruits of the Earth would be destroy'd by them; and the Air probably would be infected by them, at least, by the Corruption of their dead Carcasses; and, perhaps, some violent Distempers produced by them.

I have now gone thro' what I propos'd under the first Head, *viz.* to examine into the Nature of those Laws by which both the *material* and *animate* Parts of the World are govern'd; and to compare them with such other Laws, as they were originally capable of being govern'd by: That from hence
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it may appear, that all those natural *Evils*, which are observed in the Creation, and by many thought to reflect upon the Wisdom of its Author, are strictly speaking no *Evils* at all; but only the genuine Result of that Want or Imperfection, which finite and created Things, endued with such various Powers and Qualities, and with different Degrees of them, and regulated by such general Laws, as we observe, must unavoidably be liable to.

That which remains farther to be discover'd upon this Subject, is the Origin of *moral Evil*, which I shall attempt to do by considering distinctly,

1. The *Powers, Faculties, or Perfections*, which belong peculiarly to *Man*; and the *Degrees and Extent* of them.

2. What are the proper *Objects* of such *Powers* and *Faculties*; and wherein consists the Nature of *Virtue* and *Vice*, *moral Good* and *Evil*.

3. What are the proper *Motives* and *Inducements*, and how to be applied, so as to procure and promote the Practice of *moral Good* or *Virtue*, and to hinder or prevent the Practice of *moral Evil* or *Vice*. From which Considerations it will appear how it is possible for such Creatures to commit Sin, and what is the Cause of it; notwithstanding the Creator is infinitely good. And from hence we shall be enabled to answer such Objections as are usually made against the present Constitution and Government of the *moral World*.

The Sum of these Objections is expressed by the *Platonic Philosophy* thus; *Whence is Evil, when every thing that God does, is Good?*

By the *Epicureans* thus; *God, says Epicurus, is either willing to abolish all Evils, but not able; or, he is neither willing nor able; or else, he is both able and willing. If he is willing and not able, he is a weak Being; which is not agreeable to the Notion of God. If he is able and not willing, he is an envious Being;*

which is no less disagreeable to the Notion of him. If he is neither willing nor able, he is both a weak and an envious Being, and therefore not God. If he is both willing and able, which is the only Thing that is agreeable to his Nature; then whence come Evils? or why does he not abolish them?

By the *Academic* thus: *That God had done better by Mankind never to have given them any Reason at all, than to give them it attended with such pernicious Consequences.* [*Tully De. Nat. D. Lib. III. § 27.*] Wherefore had he consulted the Good of Mankind, he should have prevented the Abuse of Reason, and given them only such good Reason, as should have driven away all Evil. For as he has all Knowledge, so he could not but foresee what would come to pass; and, as he has all Power, he could have hindred it. And, therefore, *That either God does not know the Extent of his own Power, or has no Regard to the Affairs of Mankind; or else he cannot judge what is best for them.*

Thus the Philosophers of old vainly reason'd concerning the Government of the moral World. The general Fallacy of whose Arguing appears from hence;

First, in the Epicureans, their Arguments, if they prove any Thing, prove too much, viz. That there ought to have been no finite or created Beings at all. For if the true Notion of God be, that he is to exercise his Power and Attributes in the highest Instance that is possible, it is manifest that these Perfections being infinite, the Object of them must be so too. Which destroys the Foundation of different Orders of Beings, and takes away his Liberty of communicating Instances of Goodness to them proportionably to their several Capacities, and as he sees fit; whereas the Notion of God, from the Observation of his Works, is, that there should be different Species of Beings; of different Abilities; and consequently the Exercise of
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his Power, and other Attributes towards them, be proportion'd to their respective Capacities, and as he thinks most conducive to attain the End propos'd.

The Arguments of the *Academics*, are at least, either, 1st. Arguments *ad Ignorantiam*, and prove only that human Capacity is very shallow, and not that the Reason of Things is absurd. For upon due Consideration it will appear in the *moral World*, that the proper Objects are duly proportion'd to the *intellectual* and *rational* Faculties; and that there are *Laws* agreeable to them, and *Motives* suited to *incline* them. Or else,

Secondly, These Objections are Arguments drawn from the natural *Imperfections* of finite intellectual Powers and Capacities. Which if they prove any Thing, prove too much, *viz.* that it were better to be without such Faculties, than to have them so capable of being abused. Which is a Contradiction to the very Supposition of them. For they cannot be in any Degree, but they must in the Nature of the Thing be liable to *Abuses*; as shall be more fully made appear afterwards.

The Objections made against the System of the *moral World*, by Mr. *Bayle*, are such,

First, As are drawn from the natural Notions we have of God, according to the Principles of Reason and Philosophy. [See *Entretiens de Maxime, & de Themiste*, Page 142. See his *Dict.* under the Word *Paulitiens*. Remark E.]

Secondly, And such as are drawn from the Representations made of the divine Perfections in the Scriptures. [See *Ibid.* Remark E. ii. *Ibid.* Remark F.] The Weakness of which I shall shew. And,

First, As to those Arguments drawn from the natural Notions we have of God; *these*, far from teaching that it is inconsistent with the Notions we have of an infinitely, powerful, wise and

good Being, that there should be any Defects or Irregularities in the *moral World*, shew us, on the other Hand, that such Defects are the natural Result of Things being finite; else there must have been no such Creatures at all endued with those Faculties; or no general Laws prescribed for their Direction: For every one of these supposes a Possibility of Deviation. Philosophically speaking, therefore, there can be no such Thing as *Impeccability* in any created Being soever. Since therefore finite intelligent Beings necessarily suppose *Peccability*; either we must say that it is inconsistent with the Idea we have of God to create any Thing superior to Stones, or indeed any Thing at all; or else that he is at Liberty to create what Sort of intelligent Beings he pleases, to place them under such Circumstances, and to regulate them by such Laws as he sees best upon the Whole. There is no Medium between these two. This Mr. *Bayle* seems to be aware of, and to acknowledge the Consequence of it, *viz.* That the Universe is but *one* Being; and every Thing in it Part of that Being; and all their Motions and Actions the necessary Effects of that Being. [See *Paultiens*. Remark F] Which is to affirm that God cannot make any Creatures at all, endued with Liberty, or a Power of moving themselves. The Consequence of which is, that *Men*, and all other superior as well as inferior Creatures, have no Existence at all, but are only Modes of the Deity; or at least, that they are without any *Understanding* and *Liberty*. Which is just such a Way of arguing, as it would be to assert, that there is no such Thing as *Matter* or Motion, but that they are only imaginary Representations in our own Minds, without any Thing external to answer them. I don't see how we can argue about such Hypotheses, it must be referr'd to the Experience of Mankind to determine in such Cases. For even in Mathematical Demonstrations, there must be some simple

ple Truths known by *Intuition*, which whoever pretends not to allow is incapable of seeing any Deduction from them. And so it is in the Case of *Morality*; there must be some *immediate* Objects of the Understanding, as easy to be taken Notice of, as natural Objects are by the bodily Senses. And it is impossible to argue with any one who sees not the Difference of such intellectual Objects, *viz.* moral Good and Evil. Unless therefore, it can be proved to imply a Contradiction to suppose any such Thing as finite created Beings, endued with Understanding, Liberty and a Power of acting; it must be granted *possible*, that such Beings may exist; that is, that they are the Objects of Power, and depend upon the Will of the supreme Being. But as to their actual Existence, this cannot be determined otherwise than by *Experience*, and to that we must appeal: And so evident it is in these Particulars, that we may ask any one who pretends to be diffident herein, what greater Evidence he could desire, upon Supposition that the Thing were true, that we now have, that Man is an *intelligent* and *voluntary Agent*. Therefore, as in the *natural* World it must be left to the Criterion of every one's Senses, whether there be any such Thing as *Matter*, and what particular Laws of Motion it is subject to, before we can pretend to make appear the Excellency and Goodness of the Creation; so likewise in the *moral* World, it must be taken for granted, that by what every Man feels within himself, and observes in others, Mankind are *intelligent* and *voluntary* Agents. And, upon this Supposition, the true Method of Enquiry in order to judge of the Goodness and Wisdom of the Creator, and the Perfection of the Creature, must be to examine the Condition of such Beings, what Laws they are subject to, and under what Obligation to observe them. Had Mr. *Bayle* pursued this Method he would have seen the Absurdity of introducing two Principles to account for *moral Evil*.

Secondly,

Secondly, As to the other Arguments taken from the Scripture Representations of the present Circumstances of Mankind, and the Method of God's dealing with them, it may be observed, that they are founded either upon some rhetorical or allegorical Expressions, or that they relate to some Custom, or Opinion, which prevailed at that Time, but now difficult to understand; or else built upon mere Hypotheses, which are inconsistent with Scripture, and repugnant to common Sense.

Thus those Words of King David, *Psal. lviii. 3. The Wicked are estranged from the Womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking Lies*; have been applied to all Mankind representing them as born with a natural and universal Corruption and Depravation of the very *Faculties* and *Dispositions* of their Minds which yet are only a rhetorical Description of the Practice of very wicked Men only. Thus because the *Devil* is said to be the *Prince* and *God* of this World, such Expressions have been aggravated so as to make him a very Powerful Being. [See *Bayle Dict.* under the Word *Paulitiens* H. C.] Yet comparing these Texts with others not so figurative, nothing can be more clear, than that the *Devil* is a Being very little superior to Man: That it is from the Similitude which wicked Men bear to him, that they are said to stand in Relation to him: That his Temptations are generally no other, than what the common Infirmities and Passions of Men expose them to; and that such Expressions are intended to signify no more than the *Practice of Sin*, and the Prevalence of it among Men. And the same may be affirmed of the *Punishment* in Scripture threatned to impenitent Sinners; the particular Expressions upon this Head are generally *figurative*. But one Thing is certain from Scripture, that the unerring Rule of Justice shall be so strictly observed, that the Sinner himself shall be forced to confess it. Can there
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be any Doubt, after such Declaration, how any obscure or figurative Passages are to be understood? With Regard therefore, to the Explication of Scripture, upon the subject now before us and as an Answer to any Objections drawn from modern Schemes of Divinity, I lay down the following Rules.

1. It is evident, from a cursory View of the *Old* and *New Testament*, that they are miscellaneous Books, treating of great Variety of Subjects. But as they are Books of *Morality*, and not of *Philosophy*, and the Design of them all is to recommend the Practice of Religion and Virtue, so ought they to be very exact in conforming their Words and Expressions to the *moral* and *religious* Sense of them; and the *Philosophical* Sense being foreign to the Subject, and only occasionally introduced, there is no Occasion of such Accuracy in them, but they may safely, nay, it would be absurd if they should *not* be deliver'd according to the vulgar Acceptation of Words, as not being intended to inform Men in those Matters.

2. The general Design of the Scriptures being to recommend Morality; they take it for granted, that *Man* is a Subject of *Morality*, and, consequently, that he is an *understanding* and *free* Creature, and that he has *Passions* to be excited by Promises and Threats.

It cannot, therefore, be expected, that they should give nice Definitions, or Philosophical Proofs, whether Man be an *intelligent* and *voluntary* Agent; how *Liberty* can be reconciled with the divine *Prescience*, and the like. Every Thing there relates to Practice. Hence it is that we don't find those Words, *Necessity*, and *Liberty*, and such like, at all used in those Books in the philosophical Sense. That was foreign to the Subject, and no Part of the Design.

3. The Scriptures containing in them a Body of Laws, for the Regulation of Men's Behaviour in Matters of Religion; it was proper to consider
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Men only as Subjects, and God as the Governour of the World. Wherefore, tho' his Laws are founded in the eternal Nature and Reason of Things, this is not insisted upon; but they are recommended in a Way of Authority. Hence it is in Scripture, that we find no particular Proofs of the Existence of God, no Demonstration of his metaphysical Nature and Essence, because these are not the Foundation of the Worship there prescribed. For the same Reason likewise we never find *moral Virtue* or *Vice* treated of in the same Manner as in other Writers. Every Thing here is referr'd to God as the continual Author and Preserver of all Things; and *they* are represented as the Effects of his good Will and Liberality. Wherefore, we find them perpetually called *Gifts*, and *Graces*, and *Talents*, and such like. The *Faculties* and *Powers* of Men's Minds, are his *free Gift*, and every Instance of Help natural or supernatural, is the Effect of his mere *Grace* or *Favour*, which Men have no Right to demand. In the Scripture Account, therefore, of the Original of *Moral Evil*, we must expect such a Representation of it, as is agreeable to the professed Design of these Books, viz. to shew the Relation and Dependence Men have upon the supreme Being, and not a strict philosophical Account; not but that *both these* are perfectly agreeable, and are only different Ways to the same End.

4. The Foundation of Religion being laid in the Mind, the secret Disposition and Acts of which are only known to a Man's self; therefore, the Powers of the Mind can only be signified and expressed in figurative Terms. The Motives also to Practice are spiritual; and, consequently, *these* likewise must be represented by Allegories taken from Things familiar to us. And thus we find in Scripture the State of Religion illustrated by all the beautiful Images that we can imagine or conceive; in which the natural Harmony or Order

der consist, as regulated by the strictest Rules of Discipline, taken from those observed in the best-order'd temporal Governments. In the Interpretation of Places in which any of these Images are contained, the principal Regard is to be had to the figurative or spiritual Sense of the Words, which render Things easy to every one's Capacity, and make most lasting Impressions on their Minds. Of this Nature are all the Ceremonies prescribed to the *Jews*; every one of which was intended to shew the Obligation, or recommend the Practice of some moral Duty. And the same may be applied to the Rewards and Punishments peculiar to the Christian Dispensation, with Regard to a future State. The Rewards are set forth by Things Men most delight in, in this Life; and the Punishments are such as are inflicted by human Laws upon the worst Malefactors: But neither of them can be understood in the *strictly literal* Sense, but only by Way of Analogy.

Lastly, As all Nations have their peculiar Rites and Customs, and as every Language has a peculiar Idiom of Speech, it is impossible to understand a Discourse relating to a peculiar People without some previous Knowledge of the Nature of each of these. The *Jews*, for whose Use the Books of the *Old Testament* were written, were a distinct People; wherefore, their Opinions and Doctrines in Religion must be learned from those, by comparing the Expressions of different Texts with each other, and not from the Interpretation they will bear, compar'd with other Languages, in Countries whose Customs are different from theirs. Thus, with Regard to the Practice of Virtue and Commission of Sin, the fundamental Principle of their Religion is, that there is one God, who created and preserves all Things, who is infinitely wise, just, and good, and to whom they ascribed every Thing that was good, not only the Faculties of their Minds, but even their
voluntary

voluntary Actions. So likewise there is Mention made of certain Angels, whose Captain is called the *Devil* or *Satan*, by whose Example and Instigation they committed Sins against God, which made him punish them. Hence the *Jews* were led to ascribe all *Sin* to him, as if he suggested every wicked Thought. Upon this Supposition, their Forms of Speech in the *Old Testament* are very plain and intelligible: And the *same Thing*, under divers Considerations, may be said, in one Place, to have God for its Author; and in another Place be attributed to the Devil, as in the Case of King *David's* numbring the People.

With Regard to the *New Testament* nothing can be more evident, than that it is in every Thing conformable to the *Jewish* Notions; wherefore in order to the right Understanding of the Description of any *Thing*, or the Character of any *Person*, it is necessary to have Recourse to the *Old Testament*, and to examine in what Sense the Phrases are there used, and how applied. Thus in the Instance of the Punishment threatned to impenitent Sinners in a future State; all the particular *Circumstances* of it, as the *Place*, the *Degrees*, &c. are taken from the known Practice of the *Jews*, and consequently ought to be explained by the Usages in the Passages they refer to.

Had these Rules, with Regard to the Interpretation of Scripture been observed in the Enquiry into the Cause and Origin of *moral Evil*, all those Insinuations concerning the Authority and Genuineness of Scripture, and the Absurdity the Doctrines of it are charged with, had been prevented. For it is with these Books, as with all other Things, that by a right Application may be of Use and Service to Mankind: They are, in their own Nature, liable to be misapplied, which must produce the contrary Effects; and the greater the Advantages that accrue from the right Use of them are, the

the more Instances must there be, in which they are capable of being abused, to the Disservice of Mankind.

I shall now pursue the Method I at first laid down, by considering distinctly the *Powers, Faculties, or Perfections*, which belong particularly to *Man*, and the *Degree and Extent* of them.

Man is properly distinguish'd into two constituent Parts, Body and Soul. The *one* he has in common with the inferior Creatures, and in the *other* he resembles the superior Intelligences. And under this general Distinction of *Matter* and *Spirit* is comprehended the Whole of what we know of the Universe, each of them having Properties peculiar to themselves, which cannot belong to the other; whence they appear to have entirely different *Substances, or Essences*, tho' we have no distinct *Idea* of them. Each of these hath Place in the Composition of *Man*. The former of these, the *Body*, or Man consider'd only as endued with *Animal Life*, has already been treated of.

That which remains now to be consider'd, is the *Soul, or Mind* of *Man*, what *Powers and Faculties* it is endued with, what *Laws or Rules* it is subject to, that we may see what *Imperfections and Evils* may arise from hence, which will take in the Whole of what I at first proposed. The Mind, tho' but one simple, uniform, intelligent Subject, yet is endued with several *Powers and Faculties*, which are denominated from the different Objects, or diverse Manners of the Exercise of them. The first and most general of these *Powers* of the Mind is Perception; by which it takes Notice of those Objects which are presented to it. In this the Mind is *passive*. But it has, moreover, a Power of *retaining and recalling* those Impressions made upon it, and of comparing them with each other, and seeing whether they have any Relation or Dependence, or be disagreeable and unconnected one with another;

ther; and then by putting them together, of forming a Judgment of the Whole. And this depends upon a Man's Will, whether such Objects shall be long retain'd, or often recall'd, and so does likewise the Exactness or Intenseness of his viewing them, and finding out their Properties and Relations. But after all this, the Judgment that he forms of them, or the Truths which result from such Comparisons, are such, as he cannot avoid seeing. The last Property of the Mind is the Power of *acting*, or *conforming* itself to that Judgment which it has made in Things relating to Men's Behaviour towards, and Conversation with, others. And in this, properly, *Freedom* or *Liberty* consists, in the being able to act, or not act, after seeing what is fittest to be done. In these Faculties of the Mind is laid the Foundation both of natural and moral Knowledge. Concerning the Certainty of these Faculties, let a Man examine himself, and he will find, he naturally proceeds in this Method. But the *Degrees* of these are different in different Persons, and we have Reason to think, that in Angels, and still other superior Creatures, they are more extensive. On the other Hand, in those Creatures inferior to Man, these Powers are in a lower Degree, and in those Creatures in very different Proportions. The Power of simple Perception is evident in them all. But the Power of Judgment, or of comparing Things together, and of seeing Truth and Falshood, they seem not to have at all; but only to determine themselves by the Agreeableness or Disagreeableness of those Objects which are immediately present to them. But as to the self-motive Power, 'tis evident, they are possess'd of that. But because they have not the Power of abstract Reasoning, nor the same Understanding and Sense of moral Good and Evil, which is in Men, therefore, we call it generally *Spontaneity*. These are the principal Powers, which we observe in all intelligent Creatures, but particularly in Man.

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But Men have not only that *Sense of Moral Good* and Evil, which arises from the Understanding, but also a *natural Inclination* to moral Good. These Dispositions of the Mind the Heathen Moralists made the first Principles of virtuous Actions, and distinguish'd them into four Sorts. The first of which is a *Desire after Truth*; the next is a *Love of Society*; the third is a *Sense of Honour and Dignity*; the fourth is a Sense likewise of *Order and Decency* in all our Words and Actions.

But there are *other Inclinations* which arise from the *Body*, and which are the Foundation of several Passions in Men. Those that are necessary to preserve Life, such as Hunger and Thirst, and the like, have been examined into. But the same Principles have a different Effect upon an intelligent and rational Creature: And therefore, with Respect to such, must be consider'd in another View. We need only to consult the Motions of our own Breasts to be sufficiently convinced of the Nature of human Passions, and of the powerful Effects of them. The Instances of Love and Hatred, Hope and Fear, and the like, are so common, that they need no Proof. 'Tis the Application or Misapplication of them that wants to be consider'd and explain'd. In inferior Creatures, these Passions seem only to influence them, while the Objects are present: But in Men who are capable of reflecting or retaining the Images of absent Objects in their Minds, they may be very much heightened or diminished, according to their Pleasure.

These are the principal Faculties and Inclinations, Powers and Disposition, which we observe to be in Men, and if we consider them singly, what they are in their own Nature, and what the Use and End of them, we may conclude not only the intellectual Perfections, but also these bodily Affections and Passions are very good, that is appointed for very wise Ends; and, consequently,

that every *Evil* in them is either a natural *Imperfection* only, or else arises from the Misapplication or Abuse of them by voluntary Agents; their *Liableness* to which Abuses, was not possible to be prevented, but upon Supposition of destroying their natural *Powers*. Thus the Power of *Understanding* is a natural Excellency. 'Tis therefore, very agreeable to the Notions we have of God, to think, that he should create some Beings with such Power as this. And it being a Gift of God, he may communicate *what Degrees* of it he pleases, and in what Circumstances, and upon what Conditions. So likewise the self-motive Power is an Excellency, because hereby an intelligent Being is capable of conforming his Actions to those Truths and Relations, which by his intellectual Nature only, he could see the Agreeableness of; and this renders him a Subject of Morality and Religion. And here also there may, indeed, be said to be different Degrees of Liberty; that the Instances and Opportunities of exercising this Power, may be many more, and much greater in some Creatures than in others: And these also must be referr'd to the Creator's Will, no one having any Right to any of them. Also the same may be affirm'd concerning those Inclinations and Passions which arise either from the Mind or the Body; they are of great Use, and design'd for very good Purposes. Thus the Mind is naturally disposed to Virtue, the Excellency of which is distinguished by the Understanding: And Men are excited by their bodily Affections, to do a great many Things, which they would not otherwise have thought of, had they not been signified to them in this Manner; and which are necessary to their Preservation and Well-being. The Degrees of *these* also are different in Creatures of the same, as well as in those of different Species; and entirely depend on the Will of God, who has proportion'd them to the respective Circumstances

ces of the several Creatures. In the irrational Part of the Creation, these Affections are the sole Spring and Measure of all their Actions. In Man the Objects of these Passions are the same, but ought to be directed by Reason; they are to him in the Nature of Instruments, in the Use or Abuse of which consists the Good or Evil of them. And in Angels, who do not want such Maintenance, Preservation and Continuance, as we do, there may be no Occasion for such Passions: But their Love of Virtue may be sufficient to induce them to conform to the Rules of it in all their Actions. It is therefore evident, that in the Nature of Things *these* are all perfectly indifferent, both as to their Existence at all, and as to the Degree and Manner of it. The Variety is infinite, and it belongs to Wisdom and Goodness to determine *which* shall actually exist, and which, upon the Whole, are the most proper and convenient Circumstances to place them in. We can come to the Knowledge of them only by Experience and Observation. Whence by a particular Examination of the several Sorts of Powers and Faculties, and the Objects corresponding to them, we are able to form a Judgment of the general Nature of the Being to which they belong: We can see wherein the Perfection of such a Being consists; and what Kind of Life it ought to lead in order to attain such Perfection. From the Notion we have of the Perfections and Attributes of God, 'tis rational to suppose, he has made many Sorts of intellectual Beings, which in their proper Places may contribute to the Beauty and Order of the Creation. And so in Fact it appears to be. In order therefore to judge of the Perfection or Imperfection of any Being, and the *Good* or *Evil* it is incident to, it is necessary to consider the constituent Parts of it singly, what its several Powers and Qualities are, and then to put them together, and see what is

the Result of the whole Composition. In the present Enquiry *Mankind only* is our Subject: How it comes to pass that there is so much Sin practised by them. We have examined the several Parts of Man's Nature; and in these there appears no other Evil, than that of Imperfection, which Men have in common with the highest created Beings whatsoever. And according to this Rule, there ought to have been no Diversity of intelligent Beings, but the supreme Being was obliged to exert his infinite Perfections to an infinite Degree. For wherever we stop short of Infinity, the Understanding will be capable of being imposed upon, and a smaller Defect, in so exalted a Nature, is proportionally as criminal as a greater one in a Being of a meaner Sort. But Experience sufficiently testifies the contrary; and shews us that the Wisdom and Goodness of God is much more displayed in making great Variety of intelligent Beings; from the different Circumstances and Relations of which arise different Duties, in the Performance of which they find particular Satisfaction, and are moreover capable of Rewards of Happiness. From hence it is reasonable to expect, that God should deal with such Creatures according to their respective Capacities, so that upon the Whole there should be the most Good; and that his Government, and the Nature of Things, should be so perfectly consistent, as that, finally, such Rewards should be co-incident with *Virtue*, and with that *natural Happiness* which results from the Practice of it. Thus much is demonstrable from the Perfections and Attributes of God. But all the Particulars, it is impossible for us to know. But as *moral* as well as *natural* Truth is analogous, we have a good Foundation from what we do know, to judge of other Things we do not. It is the present Scene of Life only, that is open to us; we are in great Measure ignorant both of what is past
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and future ; it is impossible therefore to see the Connexion and Dependance they have upon each other. There is also just Reason to think there are Intelligences superior to Man ; of these we can know little more than what the Scripture says, *Heb. i. 14.* But we know enough of our own present State to see God's wise and good Government of Mankind, to justify him in this Respect also. Thus we see that Powers and Faculties, Dispositions and Affections, whether *natural* or *moral*, cannot properly be stiled *Evil* ; either as to the *Nature*, or as to the *Degree* of them. All the Evil that there can be, in *this Respect*, consists either in the *Want* of some Perfections, which other Beings are endued with ; or else in having some Perfections in a *lower Degree*. Neither of which is a real *Evil*. For it is evident, that bare Existence is better than Non-existence ; animal Life than unactive Matter ; Intelligence and Liberty than Instinct. 'Tis evident also, that every one of *these* is *voluntary*, and the free Gift of God, which he may give as he pleases. And as God was not obliged to create any Being at all, so likewise he was not obliged to confer such particular Powers in such a certain Degree. But these were owing to his good Pleasure. And there is no Reason to complain of that Share which any one Sort of Being possesses, because God has conferr'd more on others. The Powers, therefore, and Dispositions, the Passions and Affections, abstractly consider'd, have no other *Evil* in them, but what is the necessary Consequence of Men's being finite ; and as they may be compared with Beings of a superior Nature : With Regard to whom they may be *imperfect*, and yet in their proper Places as *good* as they were intended to be. For it is manifest, that every one of them has its proper Use, and in the right Exercise of it, some good End is served. 'Tis only in the Misapplication or Abuse of these, that *Evil*,

properly speaking, consists. And this supposes that the Being posselt of these Powers and Faculties, is a *voluntary* Agent, that he not only understands what is fit and right, but has moreover a Power of acting accordingly; that he is not only endued with Passions, but also has a Power of regulating and governing them according to Reason. In any other Sense of the Word *Evil*, the Case is the same here, as is *all other* natural Things, they must all, from their *Imperfections*, be liable to many Disorders and Irregularities.

In order therefore to account for the Original of *moral Evil*, we must take in the whole Composition of Man. We must examine the several Laws, which the constituent Parts of him are subject to, and see their mutual Influence and Effect. For from these different Principles it is, that the first Motions of all Sin and Iniquity arise. The moral World has its peculiar Laws and Rules to which it ought to be subject.

What these Rules and Laws are, and what is the Obligation in intelligent and voluntary Agents to conform to them, 'tis necessary to enquire into, that we may see wherein *Virtue* and *Vice* consist; and whence it is that the Practice of the latter so much abounds in the World. *Truth* and *Right* are the proper Objects of the Thoughts and Desires of such a Being as Man. The one is the Result of the Nature and Reason of *Things*; the other is the Result of the different Relations and Circumstances of *Persons*, compar'd with each other. Wherefore as Man is *intelligent*, he is concern'd to find out *Truth*, especially such Truths as are of Importance for him to know; and as he is a *voluntary* Agent, it is his Business to regulate his Practice according to *Right*, or as the Condition he is in, with Respect to others requires. Upon this Foundation the antients Moralists built all their Precepts of *Virtue*; and from hence they drew the Obligations
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to live according to those Rules. [See *Cic. de finibus*, Lib. V. §. 9, 12, 13.]

But the Morality of the Heathens was in this deficient, *viz.* They consider'd only what the Powers and Dispositions of the Mind were *in themselves*, and what the Exercise of them were: But they did not extend their Thoughts to the original *Author*, and continual *Preserver* of them, to whose Goodness and Bounty they were so much indebted. But they comprehended their Notions hereof, under the general loose Name, *Nature*: By which they meant no more than the present Constitution of Things, the Laws they are subject to, and the Effects produced by them. And therefore the utmost Extent of their Morality reached no further, than what they called the four Cardinal Virtues. The Worship of the one only true God was entirely banish'd from among them, and consequently *moral Virtue* was only a speculative Notion to entertain the Minds of the Curious, but was of little Force to regulate the Practice of the Generality of Mankind. For tho' it be true, that the Foundation of moral Virtue is laid in the Nature and Reason of Persons and Things, and is the necessary Result of the different Relations and Proportions, which they bear to each other when compared together, and consequently is eternal and immutable; yet the Existence, both of *Persons* and *Things* themselves, is arbitrary, and depends entirely upon the Will of the Creator. The true Principle of religious Virtue therefore is a conforming to the Circumstances and Relations of Persons and Things upon this View, that God is the Author of them; that what we call the Laws of Nature, are indeed Rules prescribed by Providence for wise and good Ends; and that therefore it is the Duty of intelligent and voluntary Creatures to comply with what they thus find to be the Will of God; and to promote as far as they are able, what they see to be his Design, in Expectation of becom-

ing therefore acceptable to him, and capable of Reward from him.

Hence appears the Necessity and End of a *Revelation*; to signify in a plain and familiar Manner, that *Right* and *Authority* which God has over Mankind, and the Obligation they are under to pay Obedience to his Laws upon this Account. For tho' all the Duties of Morality are founded in the Nature and Reason of Things, yet this hinders not but that the same Duties also may be consistently recommended upon *other* very different Principles. Thus for Instance, he who proceeds by the same Rules in Morality that he does in natural Philosophy, *viz.* examines upon what the *Ends* proposed by the several Powers and Capacities of intelligent Agents must be, and thence collects what sort of a Being it is, from whom these are derived, and what Authority he has over such Creatures; such a Person cannot but see the Relation he stands in to him, and the Obligation he is under to perform every moral Duty upon this Account, *viz.* That he who has conferr'd such Benefits on Men, will expect a grateful Acknowledgment and Return: And seeing he has been so beneficent as to bestow those Gifts, he will reward their respective Improvements. These are the Principles upon which all Revelation is founded; and after this Manner is the Obligation, to the Practice of every Duty of Religion, plainly deduced in the Writings of the *Old Testament* and the *New*, but especially in the *New*.

It is every where supposed in these Writings, that Persons capable of becoming Christians, are such as are already convinced that there is a God, just, powerful and good, that he is the Creator and Governor of the World. In this View the same Things, which in their own Nature are fit to be done, become obligatory to Men, upon the Account which they stand in to God, *viz.* as an Obligation of Gratitude, and in Expectation of Reward.

ward. Sobriety, Righteousness, and Godliness, correspondent to the Relation we stand in to ourselves, our Neighbours, and God, comprehend the whole of these Things. And whatever is reasonable to be done under such Circumstances, is the Will and Command of God who made us, and 'tis therefore obligatory to all Men in their respective Stations, upon the *Authority of God*. And this is what is in Scripture meant by *Faith* in general, *viz.* such a firm Persuasion of the Existence of God, and such an entire Dependence upon his Government, as may influence Men's Actions, to do what they find to be agreeable to his Will. This single Consideration fully explains to us the Meaning of all those different Expressions used by Christ and his Apostles, wherein the same Duties of Morality are recommended under different Denominations and Views. The Reason why these Duties are seldom in Scripture call'd *Virtues*, seems to be, because the Design of Scripture being to refer every Thing to God as the first Cause, therefore the Expressions there used are such as were most proper for this Purpose. Thus St. *Paul* ascribes the very Dispositions and Actions of the Mind to God, *Phil. ii. 13*. Our Saviour compares them to Talents put into our Hands by God, who will call us to Account for the Improvement or Abuse of them. And the great Duties of Morality, Sobriety, Righteousness, and Godliness, are by St. *James* called *Gifts* with Respect to God as the Author of them, *Chap. i. 17*. By St. *Paul*, the same Duties are ascribed to the *Grace* of God, *Titus ii. 11*. Because being the Effects of that singular Favour which he has shewn to Mankind in the extraordinary Assistance of the Gospel, whereby they are instructed in the Knowledge of these Things, and thereby they are enabled to practise them. In other Places they are called, by the same Apostle, the *Fruit of the Spirit*, not only because they are internal, and proceed

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from the Disposition of the Mind, but because they were deliver'd by *the Spirit of God*, inspiring the first Teachers of the Gospel, *Gal. v. xxii.* These Instances show plainly the Nature and Design of the Christian Revelation, and what Principles it is built upon.

I come in the next Place to consider, what are the proper *Motives* to promote the Practice of *moral Good*, and to prevent the Practice of *moral Evil*, viz. the *Sanction* of the foremention'd Laws. By the Faculty of *Understanding*, Men are enabled to see what is their Duty. By the *Affections* of the Mind they are inclined to do those Things which they see are right; and an Aversion to what they know is false and unjust. But it is the *self-motive Principle* alone by which they are capable of acting, or forbearing to act according to the foremention'd Laws. Each of *these* are of a different *Kind*, so must they be applied to in a different *Manner*. There are *moral* Ends as well as *natural* Ends; and there are Means suitable to them both, which ought not to be confounded. In *natural Things* the Causes and Effects are always proportion'd to each other. But in *moral* Actions, there is no *Efficiency* at all, every Action depends entirely upon the mere Principle of Self motion in the Agent; take this away, and all Virtue and Vice is destroyed. For if we suppose any other real Agency, than what is *from* the acting Being itself, the acting Being is a necessary Agent, and so not an accountable Creature. But tho' there be no *natural Efficiency* in the Business of Morality, yet there are proper Motives which may *affect* a free Being; and be the *Occasion*, tho' not the Cause, of his acting one Way rather than the other; and these depend upon the Beings having other Faculties join'd with such Liberty. Now this is the Case with Man; he is not only a *voluntary* but a *rational* Agent. And the Method to apply to Understanding and Reason is by Truth and

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Argument. For as soon as any Truths in Morality are proposed to the Understanding, it cannot help perceiving them; and as soon as the Connexion between such Truths appear, it cannot help being convinced. *Moral Truth*, therefore, may be a Rule of Action to a free Agent, endued with Understanding, without diminishing his Liberty. For Understanding and Reason are no *Substances*, and, consequently, have no natural Power to produce Action; and the same may be said of the Dispositions of the Mind. It is not inconsistent with Reason and Liberty to have an *Inclination* for Truth and Right, and an *Aversion* to Falshood and Wrong. These may be excited by Persuasion, and may induce a free Agent, but they cannot force him to comply. But besides these, there are other Passions, such as *Hope* and *Fear*, which arises from Self-Love, which have their Influence upon Man. From some or all of these Principles arises every Motive to any virtuous Action; and, upon these Accounts, are the Actions *good* or *evil*. The mere Power of acting, or forbearing to act, is a natural Perfection, but there is no *moral* Good or Evil in it abstractly consider'd.

Morality, therefore, supposes that there should be some Law or Rule of Action. And this includes a Knowledge of such *Law*, either *natural* or *revealed*; and a Prospect of *Happiness* upon complying with the Terms of the Law, either resulting from the Nature of the Things, or else a voluntary Recompence. Thus it appears from consulting the Frame and Constitution of Man, the Dispositions of his Mind, the Passions of his Body, that every one of them has its proper Object, and that there is a certain Degree of Application necessary in the Nature of them to produce their genuine Effects. And, by comparing Men with other Beings, and with each other, it appears also what are those several Duties which they owe to each other, and their Obligations to discharge them.

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By this Means we may form a Judgment what Sort of Creature Man is, what he is capable of, and in what Manner he is to be applied to. And, on the other Hand, we shall see how he comes to fall short of that Perfection which he was originally designed for; we shall see *whence* it is that he perverts and abuses the Powers of his Mind, the Inclinations of his Body, and becomes so miserable: Because there must be some Imperfection either in the Understanding, or the Will, or the Appetites, or else the Being would not be capable of committing Sin, since every Sin consists in a Defect, or Abuse of one or more of these. Therefore, in God, who is infinite in all Perfections, there can be no Possibility of Sin: But in all other Beings, of how exalted a Nature soever, there must be a *Possibility* of their erring in some Particulars. And the Instance given in Scripture of the fallen Angels, is a sufficient Confirmation of it. Indeed, as they have not Bodies like Men, they cannot be subject to the same Appetites, but of the Crimes which the Mind is incident to, such as Ambition, and the like, they may be guilty; and there may be other Sort of Crimes which the Frame and Constitution even of celestial Beings may render them incident to. But as Man partakes both of the intellectual Powers of Angels, and the sensual Appetites of Brutes, he must be *liable* to be imposed upon by the Objects of Sense, dictating Things different from the Objects of Reason.

And from hence the Cause of every moral Evil in the World, notwithstanding God is infinitely wise and good, is plain. 'Tis the *Abuse* of that *Liberty* with which God endued every Man. That such Liberty is in itself an excellent Gift, must be own'd by every one, who thinks there is any Difference betwixt mere *Appetite* and *Reason*, betwixt an *animal* and *rational* Life, and the Enjoyments peculiar to each of them. That there are some Subjects in their own Nature incapable of having this Faculty plan-
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ted in them; and that there are others capable of being endow'd with such a Faculty, in the Use or Abuse of which they may improve, or deprave themselves, is evident, from considering the Nature of material and immaterial Substances. But on *which* of those Subjects that are capable of receiving this Power, God will actually confer it, and on what Conditions, and under what Circumstances, depends upon his *Will*. The Perfection and Order of the Universe requires that there should be Variety in *these*, as well as all other Respects. It is therefore reasonable, that such a *Power* should be given to some Creatures: And that their other *Designs* and *Propensions* should be so strong, as to answer, as far as is possible, the Ends for which they were design'd, consistent with this Power. And hence it follows, that whenever such a compound Being yields to the Suggestions of Sense and Passion, instead of Reason, it must fall into the Commission of Sin, that is, act contrary to the Reason of Things, and subvert the Order of the Creation.

And to *this Original* the Scripture ascribes the *Sins* of Mankind in general. [See *Rom. vii.* which professedly treats of this Subject.] St. *John* says, *That Sin is the Transgression of a Law*; which St. *Paul* says, *is holy, just, and good*: And if it be the *Occasion* of very great *Evil*, it is from Men's Obstinacy, in resisting all its Motives, in despising its Threats, and in doing the very Things that are there forbidden.

That the Law of God is good, is plain, from every one's Assent to what is reasonable and just, and from that Satisfaction we receive in it: But, at the same Time, we see *another Law in our Members* that is drawing us off from those Things which Reason and Conscience dictate, to those which are suggested by Sense and Passion. And thus it must be, whilst Men carry such frail Bodies about them. *The Motions of Sin which are by the Law*, or the Inclinations

to satisfy the Lusts and Appetites of the Body, beyond what is reasonable, *will work in their Members to bring forth Fruit unto Death.*

And from hence we are enabled to answer the Objection of the antient Academicks, *That Man's being made a reasonable Creature, is the Foundation of all his Misery: And, therefore, it would have been better for him to have been without Reason.*

The Fallacy of which lies in these *two* Particulars, that such Judgment is made *partially*, and that 'tis made from the *Event* only.

First, 'Tis very true, that it had been better for all those *particular* Persons, who have abused their Reason and Liberty, so far as to make themselves miserable, that there had been no such Perfections in the World. But this is no Reason why all other Persons should be deprived of all the Advantages that they can make of what these Men turn to their own Destruction, and that they should not have any Means of making themselves happy, because these Men abuse the same Means to their own Misery. Neither is this any Reason why God should not, in Virtue of his own Authority, commit such Talents to his Servants, and command them to improve them, as they will answer it to him. But,

Secondly, With Respect to the *Event*: God has given every Man Talents both of Mind and Body, and he requires no more of them than a proportional Use and Improvement, according to their Capacities, Opportunities, and Circumstances. And whatever Number of them fail in this, 'tis no Objection against the Thing in general. It was reasonable, that such Faculties should be given them to carry on that Sort of Life, which they were intended to lead, and there were no more Hindrances in the Way, than what are the necessary Result of their present Condition. Wherefore, the Blame must lie on themselves, and God will be justified.

What has been said concerning the Nature and
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Sanction of Laws in general, and the Effects that may be occasioned by them, may be applied to any Law in particular, and will equally hold good. For the Design of them all is to be a Rule of Action to all Persons to whom they are prescribed. And that this may more fully appear, and that we may give an Answer to the forementioned Objections, we will examine the State of our first Parents, and see how *Sin* entred into, and by what Means it has continued in the World.

Tho' there be no *natural* Means of knowing *who* committed the first Sin, nor in what it consisted, yet, in general, 'tis evident, from what we experience in ourselves and others, that it must proceed from the same Cause that all other Sins proceed: For as the first Man was made of the same Materials as we are, and was endued with the same Faculties of Mind, and had the same Inclinations of Body, he must be liable to the same Temptations, and be capable of complying with his Appetites, contrary to the Conviction of his own Mind. And from hence it is, that the first Sin proceeded. But the Particulars of it can be had only from Revelation; and here we have only a short Account who the Person was, and what the Sin itself was, and the Manner of committing it. And whatever Difficulties there may be in some particular Expressions, which were either personal, or related to the peculiar Circumstances of *Adam* and *Eve*, yet the general Thing intended to be declared to the World, *viz.* how Sin entred into it, and the Effect of it, is most evident.

Tho' every Part of the Creation is stiled *good*, yet this does not hinder, but that some Parts of it might naturally be better than others, and capable of being made much more so by Care. And such was the Garden of *Eden*, in which every Thing grew without Labour, that was necessary, convenient, and delightful. There was nothing for Man to do, but to dress and keep the Garden for his Diversion. [See
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Gen. ii. 8, 9, 15.] and to satisfy himself with all its Variety.

All this Plenty must proceed from a kind and good Being; and it was fit that the Person on whom it was bestow'd, should be made sensible of this, that he might thank the Author of his Happiness. Wherefore, God reserved one Tree in the Garden as a Testimony of his Sovereignty and Man's Obedience, *Gen.* ii. 16, 17. What there was in this Tree, the Scripture says not, and so we cannot know; and why it is called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, is not very certain. But whatever the Particulars were, which were of a personal Concern to our first Parents only, the general Thing which is of Use to all their Posterity is very plain. They had an express Command given them by God himself, as they had any Regard to his Authority, or their own Happiness, that they should forbear to eat of this Tree. He told them, that the Day they eat thereof they should die. How great the Privilege of Life was, they, who enjoy'd it with so much Pleasure, could not but be very sensible; and whilst they continued innocent, they had no Reason to fear being deprived of it; but, on the contrary, a very reasonable Assurance of having it prolong'd, from the Experience of the Goodness of God in first giving them Life. and a further Confirmation of it in the *Tree of Life*, planted in the Midst of the Garden for their Preservation. The Condition of Life depended upon their not eating of the *Tree of Knowledge*. 'Tis plain, therefore, both from the Words of the Threatning, and from what follow'd afterwards, that the Meaning of the Condition was this: That as they were originally made mortal, and their Life was preserved by the *Tree of Life*; the Punishment of their Transgression should be to have this Tree, this extraordinary Means of Life, taken from them, and then of Course they must die.

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This was the Nature and End of that Command giving to our first Parents, and so reasonable was it in itself, so plain to the Understanding, and so easy to be practised, that one would think there should have been no Danger of their transgressing it: Yet such was the original Constitution of Man, and such the Circumstances of Things, that he did not long continue in a State of Innocence. Where there is a Mixture of *Understanding* and *Passion* in the same Subject, they will sometimes interfere with each other. *Inclination* will sometimes prevail against *Reason*: And where there are any *other* Beings concerned, *their* Transactions may also be a *Means* of helping forward any Action. And to these Causes the Scripture ascribes the Commission of the first Sin: *The Woman saw, that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleasant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise*, Gen. iii. 6. This was the Effect of *Passion*, and of not attending to her own Reason and Experience. And as she had enough to satisfy her reasonable Desires, it must be great Carelessness to be deluded by the Beauty of this one Tree, after it was expressly forbidden.

The remaining Part is the Transaction betwixt the Serpent and the Woman. It is plain, by the Text, that the Serpent deceiv'd the Woman in two Things, by putting a false Construction upon the Words. [See. Gen. iii. 4, 5.] The *one* was, that she was not so to understand the Threatning, as if immediately upon eating of this Tree she should die, which Deceit was used to abate her just Fears. The other was, that the eating of it would make her wiser; and this was suggested to raise her *Desire*. For the Love of Knowledge was originally planted in the Mind of Man; and to be as *Gods*, *knowing Good and Evil*, must be more apt to work upon this *Desire*. This was the Manner in which *Eve* was prevail'd to sin: And her Sin consisted in this, that she hearkened to the Serpent rather than God,

and suffer'd herself to be govern'd by her *Passion*, and not her *Reason*. How this Transaction, between the Woman and the Serpent, was perform'd, is not said; and, therefore, 'tis in vain to conjecture. Thus we see how Sin first enter'd into the World, and this Representation of it is sufficient for Instruction and Example to all Posterity.

And as the Sin, and the Manner of committing it, is thus plainly described, so also is the Punishment of the Transgressors, and the Effects thereof. The first of which is a Consciousness of their own Guilt, and this rais'd in them a Dread of that Being they had offended; and, therefore they retired from his Presence. [See *Gen. iii. 8.*] But besides this, there was a positive Punishment inflicted upon them, in *common* and in *particular*. The Punishment *common* to them *both*, was that they were driven from that happy Place; and for want of the Tree of Life, after a few Years, should return to Dust. The *particular* Punishment to the *Man*, was, that he should earn his Bread with Labour and in Sorrow eat the Herb of the Field all his Days. To the *Woman*, the *particular* Punishment was, that she should conceive in Sorrow, and be subject to her Husband.

From this Account of the Sin and Punishment of our first Parents, it is evident, that *Part* of the Punishment terminated in *themselves*, and *Part* was derived to their *Posterity*. That which terminated in themselves was the Sin properly so called, the actual Transgressing of the Law, with the Sense of Guilt, and Dread of Punishment which necessarily attend it; for these are impossible to be communicated from one to another. Wherefore there can be no such Thing as transferring of Guilt, nor, strictly speaking, of punishing one Man for the Sins of another. But notwithstanding this, Men have such a Dependence upon each other, with Regard to the Circumstances of Life, and to the Good

or Evil of it, that some Persons may be Sufferers on the Account of what others have done. And this is often in Scripture called Punishment, in a figurative Way of speaking, because it was occasion'd by Sin; and in this Sense the whole Race of Mankind were Sufferers by the Sin of *Adam*: They were by this depriv'd of *Eden*, forced to provide Sustenance by Labour, had the Tree of Life taken from them, and so became subject to Diseases and Death. This is the Account we have of the Sin of *Adam*, and the Consequences of it: And a due Consideration of it will afford sufficient Answers to the Objections made against it, either with Respect to God the Lawgiver, or to our first Parents as the Subjects, or to their Posterity as Sharers in the Evil.

First, 'Tis objected, that as Man is the Workmanship of a Being infinitely good and holy, he should not only have been created without any actual Evil, but also without any Inclination to Evil: For that Inclination is such a Defect, as could not have such a Principle for its Cause. And that as Free-will is the Cause whence moral Evil proceeds, the same infinite good Being who foresaw this ill Use Man would make of this Free-will, should have determined him to that which is good, or should have always watched over him to keep him from sinning. The first Part of this Objection is answer'd by Solomon, God made Man upright, but they sought out many Inventions. And, 'tis evident, from Reason, that Man was made upright; for if we examine every Faculty of the Mind separately, we shall find, that each of them has its peculiar End and Use, has its proper Object; in a regular Application of which, and Gratification by it, it is fully satisfied and answers some very wise and good Purpose in Life. And when Evil arises from the Abuse of them, the Fault cannot be charged upon them, but upon Man who misapplies them. It is, therefore, an

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unjust Reflection upon our Affections, to say, they are in themselves sinful; the true Cause of Complaint is the Wickedness of Men's own Hearts, and not from the Nature of the Things. 'Tis Men's Reason and Understanding which render him liable to be deceived; and 'tis his *Free-will* which makes him capable of *doing* what is unreasonable and unjust.

With Regard to these Faculties, 'tis objected, that *upon the Prospect of the ill Use Men would make of them, a wise and good Being would rather have determin'd them always to that which is good*: That is, if the Words have any Meaning, it is inconsistent with the Notion we have of the Goodness of God, to make any finite, intelligent and voluntary Agents at all. This is the Objector's Meaning, or follows from such Assertions. For upon Supposition that it is agreeable to the Wisdom and Goodness of God to make a Creature endued with finite Understanding and Liberty, it is agreeable to the same Notions, that God should act consistently with those Powers that he has given him. To say, therefore, that God ought always to *determine* Men to that which is good, is the same Thing as to say, that God should make Men mere *Machines*: For there is no such Thing as *determining* Men to Goodness. Moral Good or Evil depends upon the Supposition that Men are able to *determine* themselves. But,

Secondly, *If, says an Objector, God has given Men Free-will, he should always watch over them to keep them from Sinning.* How God watches over Men to keep them from Sinning, must be judged of by the common Course of his Providence, and the several supernatural Interpositions in their Behalf, when the other was not sufficient; and to these we must appeal, whether God has not afforded Men sufficient Means of Knowledge in their Duty, and sufficient Motives to practise it: Whether they have any other Temptations than such as arise from the Constitution of Things. And to suppose any other

other *Watching*, is to take away all Opportunity from free Agents of exercising their Liberty. Besides, this could not be done but by perpetual Miracles, which is very unreasonable to suppose. For if God has made Man's Duty so plain, that if they use their Understanding, they must apprehend it, 'tis absurd to expect, when they neglect their Understanding, that a Miracle should keep them from Sinning. This was manifestly the Case of our first Parents, their Duty was so expressly commanded, that it was impossible for them to be ignorant of it. Their Opportunities of committing Sin, were the fewest that could be, and the Temptations were the weakest. So that such Sin could proceed only from Carelessness.

Secondly, Another Part of this Objection relates to the *Knowledge* of God: And this wickedly charges him with being the Author of Sin, tho' not immediately, yet mediately, by affirming, that it is altogether as repugnant to the divine Nature to produce Creatures who will infallibly sin; and that because he certainly fore-knew that Men would sin, therefore their Sin was necessary. But the Fallacy of this Argument lies in these two Things.

First, In the Ambiguity of the Word *Knowledge*.

Strictly speaking, *Knowledge* has Respect to the Things in being. And in this Sense God is said to know every Thing, as he is omnipresent; and fully comprehends every Particular of them. This is what we call *natural Knowledge*.

And with such Sort of Knowledge the future Actions of Men cannot be known, because they have no Existence, and therefore are not the Objects of *Science*.

But there is also a *moral Sense* of the *Knowledge* which regards future Events.

The Certainty whereof depends upon a Multitude of Things, the particular Circumstances of which, conduce towards effecting the Event.

This, in Men, is only *Probability* or *Conjecture*. Now if this Sort of *Knowledge* be universally extended, and to an infinite Degree, it will be what we call *Foreknowledge* in God. Which tho' it be different from his natural Knowledge, yet 'tis as certain: For as God prescribes Laws to the Creation, he can, with Regard to the *inanimate* Part of it, tell for any Time to come what the State of it will be. And with Regard to the *animate* or *rational*, he can tell what Degrees of Knowledge every Being has; and what are the Inclinations of the Mind, and Affections of the Body. And he can further tell, how far they will determine themselves by them; all which put together, become infinitely exact; and is the Foundation of *Prescience*, and of foretelling future Events.

Secondly, The other Fallacy in the Argument we are now upon, consists in imagining that *Foreknowledge* is the Cause of Action; or else that it is a sufficient Reason for preventing such Action: Neither of which is true. That Knowledge is not the *efficient Cause* of Action in any Being is evident from hence, that Knowledge has no Efficiency; it is no Substance, and consequently has no impulsive Power. Since therefore Events are not determin'd by Foreknowledge, but Freedom of Action remains the same: This vindicates the divine Goodness from being the Cause of Sin; and shews that it rises from the Agent himself.

And as to the remaining Part of this Objection, that if *Foreknowledge* be not the Cause of Sin, yet it ought to be a Reason for a good Being to prevent it. This also is built on a wrong Foundation. Every Attribute of the Deity has its proper Object; and our not attending to that, creates Confusion: And this is the Case here. The right Application of Foreknowledge does not consist in hindring Events, which cannot be done, but by destroying the Subjects, but in doing all that is proper to be done, consistent

sistent with the Faculties of the Agent, and with the other Attributes of the Deity, to induce a free Agent in a moral Way, to determine himself to do what is right and just.

Lastly, All that remains upon this Head is what is called the *Infection* of Sin; particularly that of our first Parents: That it produced all imaginable Crimes over the Face of the Earth. But we find no such Representation as this in Scripture; it is there expressly said, *That the Son shall not be punish'd for the Iniquity of the Father*. And therefore whatever Evils befall the Children, which the Parents might be the *Occasion* of, are but improperly called Punishments; and are such as might justly come upon them, had their Parents not sinned. So that we ought not to esteem them Sinners upon that Account.

The *Infection* of Sin is chiefly the Example, Authority or Persuasion of *others*: The *immediate Cause* must be from Men's *selves*. So that tho' some may be great Sufferers by Occasion of *others*, yet so long as they are not conscious of any personal Guilt, they cannot think those Evils to be Punishments. The *Sting of Death is Sin*, 'tis looking upon Death as a Punishment for Sin, that which makes it terrible. It would have another Appearance to an innocent Person, who would look upon it only as one of the natural Effects of the present State of Things. And thus the Effects of the first Sin are explain'd: *In Adam, or by Adam, all died*; Which Evil his Transgression was the Occasion of. But as Men have no Right to live for ever, it would have been no Injustice, had God made them originally mortal. But this Subjection to Death, when consider'd as a Punishment, is a Punishment for their own Sins, and not for the Sins of their first Parents. *Wherefore as by one Man Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin, so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned*. This is all the Effect that the Scripture mentions of the Sin of our first Parents.

But for a further Explication of this, let us consider the present State of Mankind, according to the Gospel Account of it; in order to see what Provision is there made to prevent Sin, whence it is that the Gospel produces not the design'd Effect, and what is reasonably to be expected after the Foundation of the Gospel is laid in this, that all Men are Sinners: For the Truth of which, the Apostles appeal'd to every Man's own Reason. And that this was the Case of all Mankind in every past Age, appear'd from the Confusion of the best Men among them, and from the general Practice of the whole World in their Sacrifices, and other religious Rites, whereby they signified the Sense of their own Guilt, and endeavour'd to make Atonement for it.

This being confessedly the State of Mankind, both of those who had no Revelation, and those who had one; the Query was, *Who should deliver them from the Body of this Death?* Now, in Answer to this, it was necessary not only to describe the State Mankind were in, but also to show by *what Means* they came to be so wicked and miserable; which our Saviour himself does in general, *Mat. xiii. 14, 15.* From which Place 'tis evident that God has given Men Powers of *Body and Mind*, in order to find out and practise their Duty; and that if they used these as they ought, they would not fail in either Respect. Wherefore their Corruption was owing to themselves. But *St. Paul* is more particular in explaining and vindicating the Goodness and Wisdom of God's Dealings with Men: In his *Epistle to the Romans* he distinguishes Mankind into two Sorts; those that were subject to the Law of Nature only, and those that had moreover a Revelation made to them. And he shews whence it is, that each of these fail of obtaining that Effect, which it was reasonable to expect from them.

With

With Respect to those Men who had only the Law of Nature to direct themselves by, he says, that the Light of Nature is sufficient to teach Men their Duty. (See *Rom. i. 19, 20.*) Tho' God is invifible, and fo infinite, that we cannot comprehend him fully, yet something we can understand of him, which is fufficient for all the Purpofes of Religion.

The Works of the Creation are a plain Demonstration of the Power and Wisdom of God, and of the Duty Men owe to him upon that Account.

Men cannot plead Ignorance of their Duty. The Cause of all their Iniquity therefore was, either by a *voluntary* not attending to the Means of Knowledge; or else obstinately abusing those Means when they are conscious of the Truth. The Consequence of which was that *Passion* taking Place of Reason, they must run into the highest Extravagance mention'd by the Apostle, *viz.* worshipping the Creature instead of the Creator.

This is the Scripture-Representation of the State Mankind in general reduced themselves to, when they were subject to the Law of Reason only.

And not much different was the Case of those who had moreover a supernatural Law given them. The *supernatural* Means of religious Knowledge were abused by the *Jews*, as the *natural* Means were by the *Gentiles*. They frustrated all God's Intentions to do them good. After which nothing remain'd but the executing of Justice, or the shewing of Mercy: But his infinite Pity prompted him to the latter. Accordingly in due Time he sent a *Person* into the World to declare that he would accept of the Repentance of Sinners, and would reward their future Obedience.

This Person was foretold by the *Law* and the Prophets to the *Jews*, under the Titles of the *Messiah*, or *Christ*, the *Son of God*, the *King of Israel*. And the Testimony he gave of himself, was the working

ing of greater Miracles than *Moses*, or any other Prophet. To the *Gentiles*, he appear'd by the same Testimony to be a Man approved of God, and ordain'd to declare his Will to them. (See *Acts* xiii. 43.) The Design of his Mission is fully express'd by St. *Paul* in his Discourse to the *Athenians*, *Acts* xvii. 30, 31. Which Passage gives us a true Notion of the Christian Religion, and contains the fundamental Principles of the Gospel; and under these Views, and with these Expectations, is every Christian to direct his Life and Conversation.

Having seen the Nature and End of the Gospel Institution, and how well it is suited to attain the Effects propos'd by it, I come now to examine the Objections against it. And the first is, the Representation which is there made of the Power and Dominion of the *Devil*. But to this I answer, that the Scripture does not represent him *thus* great, but only as the Head and Leader of the rebellious Angels.

Now the Angels, *David* lays, are but a little superior to Men; and therefore to make any Comparison between any of them and God, is to equal finite with infinite. It is very true, indeed, that the Devil is called the *God of this World*, the *Prince of the Power of the Air*; and the whole World is said to be *his*, and every Thing in it at *his Disposal*. But all this is intended only to represent that State of Sin and Guilt Mankind are in; and to let them know what is required of them for the future, in order to their Recovery out of it. Wherefore, 'tis the visible Effects only, and the Universality of them that are there laid down, and not the natural Causes of them, or the philosophical Reasons enquired into. Wherefore, the same effect is ascribed to different Causes, according to the various Opinions of Men at that Time, and illustrated by different Similitudes, that Persons of all Capacities might, in one View or other, apprehend it. And that this is so, appears from hence, that when Christ, or his Apostles,

Apostles, speak without any Figure, they then describe such Effects only in the most intelligible Manner. Thus, when our Saviour told the *Jews* they were the *Children of the Devil*, John viii. 44. it was because they imitated him, as Children for the most Part do their Parents, in those Particulars which he was most guilty of, *viz.* Murder and Lying. Thus nothing can be more evident, than that *St. John*, [see 1 *John* iii. 7, 8, 10.] makes the Principle of every *virtuous*, and of every *sinful* Action to be from within every Man's self. If any Man commits a Sin, whatever the Cause be, *he is of the Devil*. This is fundamental to the Christian Religion; and it is by this Rule only that Christians are to distinguish the Children of God from the Children of the Devil. And that we ought to interpret Scripture in this Manner, our Saviour gives us an Example, *Matt.* ix. 5. The *Jews* brought to him a Paralytic, that he might heal him; to whom Christ said, *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins be forgiven thee*: This Expression the *Jews* thought Blasphemy. On the other Hand, they imagin'd, that every Distemper was inflicted as a Punishment of some Sin; which our Saviour well knowing, said to them, *Which is easier to say, thy Sins be forgiven thee, or to say, rise and walk?* That is, the same Thing being meant by two different Expressions, it was all one, whether the literal or metaphorical Phrase was made use of. And, in many other Places, he avoids the Enquiry into the natural and metaphysical Causes of Things, and bids Men apply the external Facts to themselves, and make a right Use of them. And the same may be said concerning the Power which is ascribed to the Devil over the Bodies of Men, to inflict several Diseases, particularly what is called *Possession*. The Testimony our Saviour gave of his Power, was, the working Miracles, which none, except God was with him, could work: The Principal of these,

these, was curing all Sorts of Diseases. Now this Power was equally evidenced, whatever the physical Cause of these Distempers were; so that it is not material, as to the religious Uses to be made of them, what Cause they are ascribed to. And hence it is, that the Writers of the *New Testament*, tho' they agree in every Thing that is essential to Religion, yet are not exact in the remote Circumstances of their Relations. And, therefore, a Fact is sometimes represented in different Expressions, according to the Notions of the Persons to whom it was deliver'd, or the different Views of them that related it. Thus, *Matt. xvii. 14.* the Man, who applies to our Saviour to heal his Son, uses several Expressions signifying the same Thing, as he was *lunatic*, that he was *fore vexed*, and that the *Devil went out of him*. From which Account, it is evident, that some of these Expressions must be metaphorical, because the same Effect is ascribed to different Causes: So that it is most probable, that these Demonstrations were given from different Considerations of the same Disease; as that of *Lunacy* from the periodical Revolution of it, that of *evil suffering* from the Effect, and that of *Possession* from the reputed Cause. And if every one of these be included, the true Inference is this, that Christ was superior to all these Causes separately or jointly; and, therefore, he was acknowledged as having all Power over the Devil. It is, therefore, great Weakness in Mr. *Bayle* to conclude, from those Expressions in Scripture, which were intended only to shew the universal Prevalence of Sin, and the Strength of the Gospel Motives in overcoming it, that the natural Power of the Devil is very near equal to that of the Son of God; when it is expressly said, that when Christ exercised his Power, the Devil fled before him, *Luke x. 18.*

And

And altogether as weak is that other Objection concerning the Universality and Force of those Temptations, by which Men are seduced into Sin, as if God laid them in the Way, and afterwards punish'd them for what they were deceived into; which Representation is contrary to the natural Notions of God, and to the plain and express Words of Scripture, in which we have as plain Account of the Nature of such Temptations, and the Manner how they operate on Men, as is possible to be given. [See St. *James* i. 13, 14, 15.]

Having thus examined the Nature and Original of Sin, and shewn, that it arises from a Principle within every Man's self, which was given him for better Purposes; I must now observe, that it is, morally speaking, impossible but that Men will commit Sin, tho' God has done all that was fit to prevent it; because it depends upon the Liberty of the Agents, who may, and often do, resist the strongest Motives. But as the Fault is wholly in themselves, so all the Consequences of Sin must be ascribed to themselves, which is the next Thing to be consider'd.

Tho' not only the original Being, but the Preservation of Mankind is wholly owing to the Goodness of God, who might take it when he pleased; yet there was no Reason to apprehend his doing it, while Men continued to observe his Laws. But after they had committed Sin contrary to their own Judgment, and the known Laws of God, they had no Right to his Protection, and were become obnoxious to *Death*: So that their State is by Sin much changed. From considering God as the most beneficent Being, they now consider him as their Judge, who will punish their Offences. Nothing, therefore, remains, but to leave themselves to his Mercy. But what Effect this would have, could not be known by

by the Light of Nature, as is evident from the Perplexity of the heathen World. For tho' it was agreeable to Reason, to resolve all into the Mercy of God, and to hope there would be a future State, in which every Thing would be set right; yet for want of the additional Testimony of divine Authority, it vanished like a Dream, and their Hopes were swallowed up by their Fears. But this whole Matter is set right by the Gospel, and so clearly stated there, as to afford us sufficient Answers to all Objections.

The most unsurmountable Difficulty, was the unequal Distribution of Good and Evil in this lower World, which Revelation furnishes us with a clear Answer to. We have, in the Gospel, the greatest Assurance given of another Life by our Saviour's Resurrection; and we are assured, that there shall be, in a future State, a final Distinction between the Righteous and Wicked: But the particular Manner of doing it, and the particular Time when it shall be done, God has not revealed to us.

By such Revelation we are assured, that this World is not the Time for Judgment; and, therefore, 'tis in vain for us to pretend to pronounce concerning the spiritual State of Men, or the Methods of Providence, from what we observe concerning them here.

Thus the Gospel gives us a clear Solution of this grand Difficulty, and teaches us to consider the Prosperity of wicked Men, and the Adversity of good Men, in a different View, and to make different Uses of them. Instead of judging our Brethren righteous or bad Men, according to the Calamities that happen to them, we are warn'd to learn by their Example, that we ourselves are liable to the same Evils, and to repent, that is, so to prepare ourselves by a timely Reformation of our Lives,
that

that if any such Calamity overtakes us, we may be prepar'd against it.

Thus we see, both from Reason and Scripture, that the Afflictions of good Men in this Life, when the Nature and End of them are duly enquired into, cannot properly be stiled Evils: For, upon the Whole, they are either over-balanced by a much greater Good, or are converted into, or made the Occasion of extraordinary Advantages to him who chearfully undergoes, or rightly applies them.

The only remaining Evil to be consider'd, is that of Punishment; and this is manifestly occasion'd by Sin, and is the just and necessary Consequence of it. Men voluntarily bring this Evil upon themselves; God is not the Author of it; neither can the most gracious Being take any Pleasure in inflicting it. Sinners have made it absolutely necessary; there could be no Government without it, no Vindication of Truth and Right, no Reformation of careless and inconsiderate Persons, nor no deterring others from doing the same Things, and falling into the same Condemnation. So that here also Punishment has its Use, and ought not to be accounted any real *Evil*, because, if it be not Men's own Fault, they may reap Advantage from it. 'Tis mixing Cruelty and Malice with the Idea of Punishment, which renders it disagreeable to the true Notions we have of the divine Perfections. For if we suppose it only as it conduces to encourage the Practice of Virtue, and discourage Vice, it is perfectly consistent with all the Attributes of the Deity.

But the great Difficulty is the Punishment threatned to Sinners in the *New Testament*, to be inflicted upon them in a future State; when *almost all Mankind shall be eternally tormented, in such a Manner as is most terrible and shocking*. This is what is objected against, and I will shew, that it

is an unfair Representation of what is said in the *New Testament*.

And, *first*, As to the Number of Persons that shall be miserable in a future State, that it will be *almost all Mankind*; this is nothing but mere Conjecture. The Declaration in Scripture is only in general, and tells us, without determining the Number of good and bad Men, that all those, how many, or how few soever they be, shall be punish'd with the Punishment there threatned, who finally reject or abuse the Gospel-Means of Salvation.

Neither is this Objection at all to the Purpose for which it is brought. It goes upon this weak Supposition, that Mankind is the Whole, or at least the most considerable Part of the rational Creatures contain'd in the Universe; and, consequently, that the Misery and Destruction of them is the Destruction of the Whole. Whereas, they are the lowest and smallest Part, compared with those *thousand thousand Spirits that minister unto God*. So that unless we can see the Connexion there will be in another State between Men and other Intelligences, it is in vain to attempt to resolve such *particular Questions*. But,

Secondly, The *Duration* of the Punishment is objected against as utterly inconsistent with the Justice of God. But this is arguing from Scripture in the same unreasonable Manner as before: 'Tis judging of the plain Places by the more difficult, instead of the difficult by the more plain. Nothing can be more clear, than the general Proceedings of the last Day. Every Man shall give an Account of his Works. The Sentence shall be just, and the Sinner shall confess it so; and all the Inhabitants of Heaven and Earth shall openly acknowledge, that the Judge of all the World has done right. After such Declarations, can we suspect any *Injustice* done to Men? Must not all other Places of Scripture, in

in which the Circumstances of this Judgment are expressed in Terms obscure or figurative, be referred to, and explained by these clear and infallible Rules, which must never be departed from. This Consideration vindicates the holy Scripture from all Aspersions, and removes all the Objections, even supposing that some *particular* Expressions cannot be accounted for. But we may consider further, that since we have no particular *Ideas* of the Things of a future State, the Happiness or Misery of that State can be only signified to us in general Terms, and by such Figures as are taken from the several Degrees of Happiness or Misery here. Thus the *Happiness* of Heaven is compar'd to all these Things, in which Men most delight in here; which yet are no more than mere Allegories, and the Punishment of the Wicked in the same Manner. And, as our Saviour conversed with the *Jews*, so the Particulars are taken from the Customs of that People, as is plain from St. *Matthew*, where the three Degrees of Punishment, as distinguish'd by the *Jews*, are mention'd in their Order, *viz.* the *Judgment*, the *Council*, and *Hell-Fire*: These shew, that in a future State, there will be Degrees of Punishment. The severest of which will be, that represented under the Character of *Hell-Fire*, which alludes to the *Tophet*, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 10. where Children were sacrificed to *Moloch*, and which was therefore defiled by *Josiah*; so that for the future, a Fire was kept continually burning in it Day and Night, and every Thing that was vile was cast into it. To this Place is that Hell, which is prepared for Sinners, compared; which as it agrees in other Circumstances, so does it likewise in this, that it will be *eternal*: Which Word we find used in Scripture in various Senses; but especially these *two*; either to signify the whole Duration of the Existence of any Being, or Thing, in any particular State; or else to signify

nify the whole State itself, in which that Person or Thing exists: Each of which may be applied to *that Punishment* which is threatned in a future State. But whatever the particular Meaning of these, or any other Phrases relating hereto be, which were not intended to give us a physical Account of these Things, but only to be moral Motives: That which is of itself sufficient to encourage the Virtuous, and to discourage the Vicious, and to justify God, is, that in dispensing those Rewards and Punishments, the most strict Regard shall be had to the past Actions of every Man, and all particular Circumstances will then be distinctly consider'd.

Mr.

Mr. Archdeacon GURDON's

Pretended DIFFICULTIES

IN NATURAL OR REVEALED

RELIGION

NO EXCUSE for

INFIDELITY.

THE Subject, which I propose to treat on, is of the last Importance for us to be satisfied in, *viz.*

I. Whether Men at first grew out of the Earth as Trees; or that there has been an eternal Succession of Men and Women, propagated after the same Manner as at present; or whether we were made by God.

II. Whether we cease to be when we die; or whether there be another State after this.

If any Prejudices were allowable, they would certainly be on this Side of Religion;

1. Because nothing but such a Belief can carry such a Man thro' the Miseries that Life is subject to.

2. Because the Belief of religious Principles restrains

292 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
strains a Man from no Enjoyments, but such as are
hurtful to him.

3. Because living under a Sense of religious Principles, will make a Man's Mind easy with Regard to any Apprehensions of a future State.

1. Because nothing but such a Belief can carry a Man thro' the Miseries of Life.

If a Man makes the least Reflection upon the State of his Life, he will presently see that he has not sufficient Power of himself to procure his own Happiness: There are many Evils he is obnoxious to. Now if there was no God to have Recourse to, the Brutes would have the Advantage of us; for as they have no Foresight of future Evils, so they could not be tormented, as we should be, with the Fears of what may be hereafter. But the Belief of a God and Providence will give us Fortitude and Patience in Adversity, while the Atheist is raging under the Circumstances of a calamitous Fortune, and cursing both himself and others. [*Enquiry concerning Virtue*, Page 70, 71, 73, 76.]

Epicurus himself could not but own, that he thought it better to believe the Fable of the Heathen Gods, than to submit to blind Necessity; because the Gods, he says, may be prevail'd upon by Prayer, but Necessity is inexorable to all Applications, that is, that it would be even better to embrace Superstition than to be tied down to the Laws of Necessity.

The Atheist, in his Account of the general Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, is forced to assign such Reasons for it, as shew him very sensible of the Profitableness of religious Principles.

When he says that Fear introduc'd it, he must own, that it would be for the Benefit of Mankind that some Being should exist, who could protect them against every Accident. Whereas the Fear about future Events, which they suppose natural
to

to us, would encrease, were we persuaded that future Events were under no Direction: Or what is as bad, under the unalterable Laws of blind Necessity. In order to amend this ill State of Things, the Atheist tells us, Mankind made themselves believe that there must be some Agent, besides the material World, which they were sure could not help them; and tho' they could not see him doing any Thing, that yet he did all, and was able to relieve his Creatures when they call'd upon him. By which the Atheist allows the Advantages of religious Principles for supporting Men against the Fears of future Evils, and consequently the Being of a God is to be wish'd for by us all.

Another Account they give of the general Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, is, that Politicians persuaded Men there was a God, to keep them obedient to the Laws: By which they allow the Profitableness of religious Principles to the Peace of Society.

Having seen the Advantages of religious Principles for our Support in the uneasy Parts of Life; let us see what the Advantages are, which the *Atheist* proposes by his Scheme as an Equivalent, for what he confesses he must deprive himself of by his Disbelief of a God. *Plutarch* tells us, his Design is to free himself from Fear, and to be at Liberty to do what he pleased: This leads me to shew,

2. That the Belief of religious Principles restrains a Man from no Enjoyments, but such as would be hurtful to him.

The Atheist's Unwillingness to admit a God, arises from a frightful Notion he has of him. And *Lucretius* says, that *Epicurus*, by curing Men of the Fear of a God, did the most signal Service to Men that ever was done.

But nothing can be more false than this Representation of God and Religion. 'Tis true, indeed, that the Scripture speaks of Religion under the

Phrase of the Fear of God. But then this is not the Fear of an arbitrary, omnipotent Tyrant, but the Fear of a wise and good Being, such a Fear as keeps Men from unwarrantable Things, from violating the Laws of Reason, and confounding the moral Differences of Things. Such a Fear, as tends to keep the World in Peace, and hinder Men from injuring one another. 'Tis the Fear of a just *Being*, who threatens to punish us, when we do such Things as would hurt us. 'Tis the Fear of a kind Father, who keeps us from harming ourselves by the Fear of offending him. This is the genuine Fear of God, which is consistent with the truest Liberty, and the best Preservative of it, and without it, it would not be possible to secure the Freedom of our Thoughts and Actions. Whenever this Fear is attended with Suspicions of the Deity, as an imperious Being, it ceases to be a religious, and commences a vicious Fear or Superstition.

'Tis against this last Sort of Fear that the Arguments of *Atheists* are directed. For they asserting, that there are no moral Differences of Things, no Right or Wrong, separate from Pleasure and Pain, it would then indeed follow, that if there was a God, he could have no moral Qualifications. And then what should we be the better for such a Being? or rather should we not fare better, if we were without such a Governor as acts by his mere Will?

Thus do the Atheists paint God, that they may have the better Colour for denying his Existence: But I have shewn this to be a false Representation of God; and that when we represent him as he really is, that he is the most amiable Being in the World.

But if after all the Pains they take to disown him, they cannot set their Minds easy from the Fears of him, the Benefit of living under a Sense of religious Principles will receive a new Degree of Evidence,

dence, which was the third Advantage of religious Principles, *viz.*

3. That the Belief of them will set the religious Man's Mind at Ease, with Respect to any Apprehensions of an after State.

The Histories of all Countries inform us, that there constantly has been a Belief of some future State, in which Men were to be accountable for their Behaviour in this. And I think it must be granted me, that whilst Men have such Apprehensions, they cannot be unconcern'd what is to become of them in this after State. And, therefore, unless the Atheist can give us a sure Method, by which we may get shut of these Fears, he must acknowledge his Scheme to be neither calculated for the Good of himself, nor any Body else: For I have shewn the Advantages of a true Fear of God, for the better Conduct of our Lives; and if the *Atheist* is willing to give up those Advantages, so as he might free himself from the Fears of an After-reckoning, we might expect he was sure of this Point; but the Apprehensions of a future State are not to be overturn'd by such trifling Reasonings as the Atheist's Scheme is built upon; nor can the Atheist himself insure himself for Life against the Fears of a future State, because he cannot prove it impossible that such a Being as God, in a religious Sense of the Word, should exist: For if he cannot be certain of that, he cannot have any of the other. 'Tis certain therefore, that the Principles of Religion are better calculated, for the Ease of Men's Minds, than those of the Atheist. For the religious Man has a comfortable Prospect; if his Apprehensions are just, he is made for ever: And if he is mistaken, yet this Belief of a future State made him pass his Life with more Satisfaction than Atheism can afford a Man. And, at last, it cannot be worse with him than the other.

But the Supposition of the *bare* Possibility of a future State must give the Atheist, now and then,

an uneasy Thought ; and when he is uneasy, I know of no Way he can take to make himself easy, but by persuading himself either, 1st, That no Man is under any Obligation of honouring God, tho' there should be one : Or else, 2^{dly}, That he is under no Obligation, because not believing there is a God, he cannot pay any Reverence to him. As to the first of these Excuses, I believe the Atheist will find it difficult to persuade himself, that no Man is under an Obligation of honouring God, if there be one ; for if there be such a Being, our Relation to him, and the Obligations we receive from him, will make it fit for us to thank him.

I am sensible Unbelievers do not allow what we call moral Differences ; but then this is upon Supposition, that their material Scheme is the true one ; and that there is no supreme Being endued with moral Perfections. But if there should be such a Being, the Atheist may be, for any Thing he knows, answerable for denying his Existence ; and for paying him no Acknowledgments for Favours receiv'd. For if there are moral Differences in the Nature of Things, and they are to be judged of by the supreme Understanding, such as by other understanding Beings, making only an Abatement for the Difference between a finite and infinite Understanding ; that is, suppose we know what Justice is in God, we must believe, that it is unjust to deny Reverence to the supreme Being, as well as it would be Injustice to refuse our thanks to any Friend for Favours receiv'd. And it can't be thought but that the supreme as well as other Beings, must make a Difference between those that honour him, and those that deny his Being. For if God has constituted any moral Differences in Things, he has thereby sufficiently declared, that it is his Intention to act suitably to those Differences.

Before I proceed any further, I cannot forbear making one Remark ; which is this, that supposing there are Persons of so perverse an Understanding,

standing, as cannot persuade themselves of a God and a Providence; they ought not to endeavour to draw Men off from such a Belief, because by their own Confession, Mankind was brought into this Belief for their own Good. They can lie under no Obligations of Conscience, because they deny all moral Differences. And therefore if they were not ill-natur'd, they would leave the rest of Mankind in the quiet Possession of so agreeable a Delusion as that of a God, and a future State. If they say, that tho' a right Notion of Religion would be beneficial to Mankind, yet Superstition is more destructive of the publick as well as private Quiet of every Man, than *Atheism* itself; And that the Histories of all Ages have convinced them, that Mankind is more apt to be influenced by Superstition, than by a religious Fear; and therefore the Odds in human Nature being on the Side of Superstition, that 'tis not safe trusting it with any Religion; I answer, that if the Fears of Superstition are the only Reason for rejecting religious Principles, then instead of setting themselves against all Religion, let them endeavour to set the World right in their Notions of Religion, and we will join with them in so laudable an Undertaking. But to proceed,

Another Evasion of the *Atheist* to avoid the Apprehensions of a future State, is, that he cannot deserve Blame or Punishment for not honouring God, because he does not believe there is one.

If this Excuse be a good one, one of these two Things must be true, either 1st, that a Man cannot deserve Blame for acting according to his Opinions, how groundless soever they be; or, 2^{dly}, because he had made a due Examination, and could find no Evidence for a God.

As to the *first*, viz. that a Man cannot deserve Blame for acting agreeably to his Opinions, cannot be relied upon; because a Man may deserve Blame for his Opinions, if he has not duly qualified

298 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
fied himself for Evidence, when 'tis offer'd him.
As,

1st, If when he is enquiring after Truth, he suffers himself to be bias'd by any predominant Passion; or,

2^{dly}, If thro' Laziness he declines a full Examination of any Question in which he is much concern'd. That these may be the true Causes of many Person's Infidelity will appear probable, by considering some of the Motives, which too often govern Men, with Regard to the Persuasions held by them. The Prejudices, which I shall at present consider, are these;

1. An Affectation of Singularity.
2. An Aversion to the Errors that have crept into true Religion.
3. A Desire of being independent and uncontrollable by any one.

1. An Affectation of Singularity is a strong Temptation to Infidelity. The striking out into a different Way of thinking from the Rest of Mankind, flatters the Vanity of a proud Man with this pleasing Imagination; that he shall be thought to see more than the rest of the World; and the more generally received the Opinions are, which he opposes, the greater Credit he hopes to gain by it; and therefore Religion having been the general Persuasion of Mankind, is, for that Reason, the fittest Mark for the proud Man to point his Arguments against: And the fewer he has on his Side, the more he hopes to shine.

2. An Aversion to the Errors that have crept into true Religion, has insensibly led many Persons into a Disbelief of all Religion.

But this is an unjustifiable Proceeding in any one that pretends to be a Lover of Truth; because it supposes, that where there are Errors, there can be no Truth: For they might with as much Justice argue, that because there is a Wrong, there can be no such Thing as a Right.

But

But they are not only unjustifiable, when they have no better Reason for leaving us, but also they shew great Weakness: For when Men take Refuge in Atheism, out of Hatred to Superstition, the Reason must be, because they know not how to distinguish what is true from what is false. Therefore finding they must take all or none, the Hatred they conceived against the Errors they have detected, prompts them to quit Religion entirely, as the only Way for such poor Reasoners to be secure against Errors in religious Matters.

3. A Desire of being uncontroll'd and unaccountable, as to their Thoughts and Behaviour, tempts some Persons to deny a God. And therefore they are fond of the material Scheme, as it sets them at full Liberty from all Obligations; for no one can think himself obliged to any Being, meerly for doing for him what it cannot help doing. But if a Man should acknowledge an intelligent Being for his Creator, and the Author of all his Comforts, he cannot forbear thinking sometimes that some such Submission may be due to him, as may restrain his Fulness of Freedom in Thinking and Acting. The Desire of being in a State of Independance, induced many Persons to enter themselves into the School of *Epicurus*. And the same Cause now works in those, who are Libertines in Action as well as Thought, who desire to gratify every irregular Appetite; 'tis their Interest to throw off the Belief of a God; they must, for Quietness sake, endeavour to persuade themselves, that there is no superior Understanding to animadvert upon them, for acting against the Sense of their own Minds.

I would now advise the *Atheist*, that since there are confessedly vicious Motives, that have led Men into their Opinions, that he would examine, whether none of those I have mention'd, had determin'd him to turn *Atheist*; for if he has left his Religion without

300 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
without sufficient Reason, his pleading that he acts according to his Opinion, will not excuse him from Blame and Punishment. And whatever he may think while he is in Health, he cannot secure himself against the Apprehensions of Punishment, if he has wantonly taken up the Cause of Infidelity.

But some one may say, that this Way of arguing against *Atheists* is an unfair Proceeding with them, because it is taking for granted, that a Man must be influenced by some Prejudice whenever he embraces *Atheism*. That it might be retorted upon the Believer, that he is prejudiced in his Belief of a God, because he wishes there was one. And therefore the Argument drawn from Prejudices should be omitted by both Sides.

The Answer is, that I ought to shew, that other Motives, besides Evidence, might influence Men in their Opinions; that such Motives were vicious and punishable, if there should be a God: And this in order to engage the Atheist to examine carefully upon what Motives he took up his Opinion. If the Religious is prejudiced in his Belief of a God, his Mistake cannot be hurtful to him. I ought also not to have omitted these Prejudices, as probable Motives to Infidelity; because many Atheists have been influenced by some or other of them.

If there are any who have seriously wrought themselves into a Belief of Atheism, they are not concern'd with what has been said under the Head of Prejudices, and shall be consider'd by themselves, when I come to consider this Evasion of the *Atheists*, viz. That after the best Enquiry, he could find no Evidence for a God, and therefore could deserve no Punishment for not believing one.

Having consider'd certain Prejudices, which might be supposed to have determined many to *Atheism*, I will put them in Mind, that the antient *Atheists* supported their Principles by Reasons, which the modern Atheists must own to be false, and therefore

fore were to blame in concluding against a God upon false Reasonings. This should discourage the modern *Atheist* from being over confident, lest further Discoveries should make his Cause less defensible, and himself capable of determining hastily against a God; which brings me to consider another Defect in trying any Question, viz.

2. That we deserve Blame, if thro' Laziness we decline a thorough Examination, before we take up our Opinions.

In a Matter of so great Concern, as that of a God and Providence, the Unbeliever should suffer himself to be persuaded to re-examine his Conclusions, and see whether he has not been deceived in any of his Premises. He must allow his Predecessors in Infidelity to have been careless Examiners into Nature, when they asserted equivocal Generation, and taught, that nothing could act upon Matter but by Contact; and how can he be sure that farther Enquiries into Nature may not still weaken his Cause? And if thro' Laziness he should decline such Enquiries, and his Opinions should at last prove false, his Neglect will be criminal, and himself answerable for not taking due Information. I come now to consider the other Excuse of the *Atheist*, viz. That he has made the best Enquiry he can, without being able to discover any Evidence for a God.

But before I consider what these Atheists have to say for themselves, I must insist, that they ought not to bring against us any such Objections, whose Strength arises from our Incapacity of conceiving the Nature of God; because 'tis agreed that we are finite Beings, and therefore must have finite Understandings; but that the necessarily existing Being, whoever he is, must be infinite and eternal. For something must have been eternal, otherwise something must have arisen out of nothing, which is impossible. And yet we can form no Notion
of

302 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
of an eternal Duration already past; an Argument
therefore drawn from our Inability to conceive
the Nature of an infinite Being, ought to have
no Weight with us, nor be urg'd by the *Atheist*,
because his material God would be equally affected
by it. If then he would justify himself, the only
rational Inducements to Infidelity must be one or
other of these.

Either for the avoiding some particular Difficul-
ties, which he thinks may be proved to amount to
Impossibilities in our Notion of God; which his
material Scheme is not attended with; or else, be-
cause in general there are far less Difficulties in ac-
counting for Appearances by the material Scheme,
than there would be, should we once admit a God
and a Providence.

As to the first of these Inducements, I will
shew, That it can never justify him in rejecting
Religion.

1st, Because he can never prove, that the parti-
cular Difficulties do amount to a Contradiction.

2^{dly}, Because his material Scheme is attended with
infinitely greater ones, than those he finds Fault
with in our Notion of God. And then as to the
other Inducement, *viz.* That in general, there are
fewer Difficulties in accounting for Things by a
material Principle; I will shew, that some of the
most considerable *Phænomena* in Nature cannot be
accounted for by such a Principle only.

1st, The Difficulties he complains of, in our
Notion of a God, do not amount to a Contradic-
tion.

The chief Difficulties are these:

1st, That we ascribe Immateriality to God.

2^{dly}, That we allow him a Power of making
something out of nothing. And,

3^{dly}, That we make Goodness a Part of his Cha-
racter, which the many natural and moral Evils,
that appear in his Workmanship, contradict.

1st,

1st, We ascribe Immateriality to God. If the *Atheist* would prove an immaterial Substance to be impossible, he must prove that whatever is immaterial is nothing; and he must prove this one of these two Ways; either, that what we have no Idea of, is nothing; that we have no Idea of an immaterial Substance, therefore there can be no such Thing; or else he must affirm, that the only substantial Thing in the World is Matter.

To which Objections I answer, 1st, That it is not true, that we have no Conception of an immaterial Substance. 2^{dly}, That if it were true, it could not be a good Proof of the Impossibility of its Existence.

We as certainly know some of the Properties of immaterial, as we do those of material Substance. Perception, Understanding, and a Power of beginning Motion, are as certainly the Properties of an immaterial Substance, as Solidity, and a Capacity of receiving and communicating Motion are Properties of Matter. And if we can form no Idea of the Substance itself of an immaterial Being; neither do we know any thing of the Substance of Matter.

But supposing that we could form no Idea of an immaterial Being, this would not prove the Impossibility of its Existence; unless 'twas certain, that no Possibility of Being could escape the Searches of our Understanding. Whereas whatever we know of external Objects, must be derived to us thro' our Senses; and which Way will the *Atheist* take to convince us, that our five Senses are all the possible Ways of receiving Information concerning external Objects. Reason would rather tell us, that this particular Number was calculated for our present State and that probably there may be more Channels of Knowledge than we are capable of in our present Condition.

It is certain we can form no Idea of Eternity; and yet the *Atheist*, as well as we, is forced to allow

304 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
allow something to be eternal. And the very same Reason which obliges the Atheist to admit something eternal, tho' he has no Idea of Eternity, will equally hold in the Case of immaterial Substance, if there are, as I shall afterwards prove, certain Appearances in the World, which cannot be accounted for, by the mere mechanical Laws of Matter in Motion. For as he allows something to be eternal, that he may avoid the Absurdity of acknowledging that any thing came from nothing, so if he cannot make it probable, that certain Powers I lately mention'd, may arise purely from Matter; he must either own these Powers, to have existed without any Cause of their Existence; or else, with us he must admit immaterial Substance.

The other Argument against immaterial Substance, *viz.* That there is nothing substantial but Matter; is begging the Question. For how should the *Atheist* prove this? Why thus *Spinoza* does it; he gives us a Definition of Substance, that 'tis *something independent of every other Thing, and existing by a Necessity of Nature.* From thence he infers, that since there can be but one self-existent Being, and Matter is confessed to be a substantial Being, therefore there can be no Substance but Matter. But all this amounts to no more than if he had told us there is nothing but Matter; therefore no immaterial Being. He knows we deny Matter to be a self-existent Being; and, therefore, that if his Definition of Substance was a good one, that we should deny it belong'd to Matter: And then how will his Definition prove to us the Impossibility of immaterial Substance? Thus far we go then in Defence of a God, that his Immateriality cannot be proved to imply a Contradiction.

2dly, Another Difficulty which the Atheist raises against our Notion of a God, is, That Power we ascribe to him of making something out of nothing; because we do not now see Na-
ture

ture producing any Substances, but only different Modes of Being; because all the Works of Art are only the Management of pre-existent Matter, and fit it for particular Uses; therefore God, as well as every other Artist, must have a Subject prepared to his Hands to work upon. But this Way of Reasoning will never prove what ought to be proved, *viz.* That it is impossible that there should be any such Power. For this Power of making something out of nothing, or of creating a Substance, is no more than the bringing something into Being, which before had none; but this is not to affirm, that a Thing may be, and not be at the same Time, which is a Contradiction; but only that something, which once had no Being, may be brought into Being. If we cannot conceive how this may be done, this can be no good Argument against the Possibility of its being done by an infinite Power. But,

3dly, Another Impossibility the *Atheist* is wont to charge upon our Notion of a God, is on Account of our ascribing Goodness to him; which, they say, is contradicted by the natural and moral Evil, which appears in his Workmanship. But before the *Atheist* can prove that these could not proceed from a good Being he should shew it to be inconsistent with the Nature of Goodness, to make Beings with different Degrees of Perfection. If he cannot do that, then certainly every Degree of Imperfection, makes an Abatement of the Happiness of the Creature; and such an Abatement constitutes what we call natural or physical Evil.

Thus, for Instance, 'tis an Imperfection in us Men that we want such a perfect Knowledge of our own Frame and Constitution, antecedently to experience, as would enable us to find out what would be good for us, and what would be prejudicial. To supply the Want of this Knowledge, God has affixed the Idea of Pain to our Natures, which is to warn us of any Thing that might hurt us.

Pain is own'd to be a real Evil; and yet if we were not admonish'd by it, to avoid hurtful Things, what thro' Ignorance and Inadvertency of our own Frame we should never know when it was out of Order, till it was too late. If therefore it be not repugnant to the Idea of Goodness to create a Being of a limited Knowledge, neither would it be consistent with the same Goodness to make him capable of receiving painful Ideas, when such a Constitution was fitted for the Use and Benefit of such a Creature.

And thus for moral Evil; the Atheist can never shew its Existence to be a Contradiction to the Idea of Goodness, till he can fully satisfy us, that there can be no such Being as a Creature endued with a Power over its own Actions; because if that is possible, which the *Atheist* cannot disprove, such a Creature may most certainly make an ill Use of that Power, and involve itself in moral Evil.

Having shewn, that the *Atheist* cannot prove a Contradiction upon our Notion of a God; I proceed to consider the Difficulties attending his Scheme; and shew, that he is forced to take Refuge in such Explications of Things as are false and impossible.

Spinoza is the only Person, among the modern *Atheists*, that has pretended to give us a regular Scheme of *Atheism*; and by shewing his Faults, I will prove the Weakness and Absurdities of the atheistic Scheme; tho' I shall not so confine myself to the Examination of his Scheme, as not to shew occasionally, that every other Scheme, that leaves out the religious Notion of a God, will be liable to great Absurdities.

Spinoza supposes with us, "That something must necessarily have existed from all Eternity." He supposes further, "That there is no real Being besides this one necessarily existent Being; and since the Existence of material Substance is
" most

“ most evident, that this must be the one self-exis-
“ tent Being, and all other Beings nothing but dif-
“ ferent Modifications of this one material Sub-
“ stance. He supposes this Substance to be infinite,
“ and to have an infinite Number of Attributes,
“ two of which he supposes to be Thought and
“ Extension; he then affirms, in Consequence of
“ this, that all Bodies are Modifications of this one
“ Substance, consider’d as *extended*; as all Souls
“ or thinking Beings are the Modifications of this
“ one Substance, consider’d under the Notion of
“ *Thought*. So that God, the necessarily-existent
“ Being, and endued with infinite Perfections, is
“ the Cause of all Things that exist, tho’ at the
“ same Time, he differs not really from those Things
“ that exist. He is at the same Time Agent and Pa-
“ tient Cause and Effect, and every Thing he pro-
“ duces is only practising upon himself, and genera-
“ ting anew Appearance of *himself*.”

From this Account of his System, ’tis evident, that tho’ *Spinoza* and we differ as to the Subject of the self-existent Nature, yet we both agree in asser-
ting,

First, The Unity of the self-existent Being; and, *secondly*, its Immutability; for whatever Changes there may seem to be of Things, yet all this passes with him for nothing, so long as ’tis the same numerical Being appearing in different Dresses. Thus far being agreed, we are to enquire, How far he has mended the religious Scheme by rejecting immaterial Substance? And whether his material Scheme can possibly answer the above-mention’d Characters?

The insuperable Difficulties Men found in reconciling these Attributes with material Extension, inclin’d them to admit, that there might be in Nature some more perfect Manner of Existence than the material one, and this they called immaterial Substance. *Spinoza*, well aware of the Difficulties that

would disturb his material Scheme, gives us a new Notion of Matter. Matter had always been thought capable of Division into numberless Parts, each of which might exist separately from the Whole; and, consequently, if Matter was the self-existent Being, there must have been as many self-existent Beings, as Parts of Matter. But *Spinoza* was sensible, that the necessarily existent Being could be but *one*; he, therefore asserts, "That there is no more" than one material Substances." But that what we call distinct Substances, are nothing with him more than different Modes of the same Being.

But if we know any Thing at all, we know this to be false and impossible. And, therefore, *Spinoza*, by substituting Matter in the Room of immaterial Substance, has avoided a Difficulty, and taken up with an Impossibility: For the only Difficulty against immaterial Substance is this, that our Senses give us no Account of any such Existences; but as for Matter, there is nothing plainer than that this is a compound Being, and therefore can never be made consistent with that Unity and Simplicity, which are necessary Consequences of that *Oneness* of Substance, which *Spinoza* ascribes to the necessarily existing *Being*. The only Subterfuge he has is this, that there is no such Thing as a *Vacuum*, and, therefore, there can be no Separation of Matter. And supposing there is no *Vacuum*, yet those who maintain'd an Infinity of Matter, did acknowledge, that the Parts of Matter were really divisible, and, consequently, did not think void Spaces necessary in making a Separation of one particular Part of Matter from another, however necessary they might be to make a total Separation from all Matter in general. For who will not say, that two Persons are as really separated from one another, tho' the Space that separates them should be filled with other Persons, as if it were taken up by any Thing else? Indeed, *Spinoza* says, that he does not know

know whether he attributes any Thing to God that is unworthy of him, if he should grant, that he was divisible. And the Reason he gives, why Divisibility should not be an Imperfection in God, is, "Because if he is divisible, he is divided by himself, and not by any external Cause." But this Answer leaves the Difficulty in all its Strength: For let the Divisibility be caused by what it will, the Difficulty remains, how a separable Nature can be an uncompounded Being.

Secondly, Another Difficulty which the Atheist brings upon himself, is, to make Provision for the Immutability of his self-existent *Being*, while he makes Matter to be the Subject of it. We know the Difference between a Being that always continues the same, and a Being that is perpetually changing the Manner of its Existence: That a Being, who is, what it is by a Necessity of Nature, cannot be subject to Change or Corruption; we are also assured, that material Beings are subject to all Manner of Alterations.

Now, Mutability has so plain a Mark of Imperfection in it, and is so inconsistent with necessary Existence, that it gives *Spinoza* no small Trouble to clear his necessary Being from any such Imputation; and the only Way he could think of was this: Tho' the Manner of Being was always changing, yet the Substance always continued the same. But to deny the Mutability of any Being, meerely because the Substance remains the same, is to give a new Signification to the Word: For in every mutable Being 'twas always understood, that the Substance remain'd what it was, only the Mode of its Existence was alter'd; otherwise there would be no Difference between the Change and the Annihilation of a Being. And yet the Poets, as well as Philosophers, have always supposed a Difference between these two Ideas. And, therefore, *Spinoza's* Argument will only prove the Im-

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mortality,

310 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
mortality, not the Immutability, of his self-ex-
istent Being.

Besides, this Argument of the *Spinosists* proves too much: For it would prove not only that the self-existent Being was not a mutable Being, but also that there could not be any mutable Being in the World. For if the self-existent Being could be an immutable one, amidst all the Changes he went thro', only because his Substance was not destroy'd, then what could hinder Man from being an immutable Being, altho' he should change his Opinions every Day? For amidst all these Changes, he is still the same Person; and, therefore, by the Reasoning of the *Spinosists*, he would be a most steady Being, tho' his Thoughts and Purposes, were unsteady enough.

These Difficulties, or rather Impossibilities, must affect every Scheme that the *Atheist* can raise upon the Foot of a material God. But,

Secondly, I am now to consider, how he has mended the Matter, by rejecting a Power of making something from nothing.

As he allows no such Power, he is forced to derive all the Powers of Nature from the Substance of Matter, as from an *emanative* Cause, producing them by acting upon itself. And thus Thought, Sense, and Life, as well as material Extension, is drawn out of the Substance of Matter.

As there are thinking, as well as unthinking Beings, the Difficulty is, how to derive both of them from one single Principle. We account for it, by supposing an omnipotent, substantial Intelligence to have given Being to Matter, not as an *emanative* Cause, by producing it out of its own Substance, for we do not see how material Extension should flow from the Substance of a thoughtful Being, any more than how Thought should arise from Matter, but from *nothing*, or when it had no Existence previously to the Exercise of this Power of his.

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The Atheist, that he may avoid ascribing this Power of producing Substances from nothing, is forced to have Recourse to material Substance, as the only Source from whence must arise both Thought and Extension: And then he must say, that *Sense* and *Insensibility* are the Attributes of the same simple Substance of God; and yet he, nor no Man else, can tell how the same simple Substance could be both *sensible* and *insensible*, thoughtful and thoughtless.

To avoid this Absurdity, he must then say, that there is no real Difference between Thought and Extension: And this *Spinoza* says, tho' every Body else sees a manifest Difference between them. Whatever Difficulty then there may be in conceiving it possible, that something should be made from nothing; yet, I hope, there is a great deal of Difference between our *not conceiving* the *Possibility* of a Thing, and the *conceiving* it *impossible* to be. That Thought and Extension should be really the same Thing, we see to be impossible; because our Ideas of them are evidently the Ideas of different Things; and we can never know one Thing from another, if such Marks of Distinction in our Ideas will not prove a Difference in the Thing.

2dly, If there be no creative Power, there will be no other Way in accounting for the Existence of Things, but by deriving them from the Substance of the self-existent Being. But all such Derivations as *Spinoza* says, can be nothing but Modes of the divine Substance; and, consequently, the Souls of Men will be only different Modes of the divine Being; and, therefore, it will be God, and not the Man, that thinks, affirms, denies, loves, or hates. And as one Man, at the same Time, and in the same Respect, affirms what another denies, and loves what another hates, according to this Account of Things, God must, at the same Time, and in the same Respect affirm, and not affirm, love,

love, and not love, which are palpable Contradictions; yet these, or as great Absurdities, will stick fast to all the Deniers of creative Power.

For either they must affirm, that all the several Beings are only Modes of the self-existent Being, which is absurd; or if they affirm these Modes of *Spinoza* to be real Beings, they must admit what is equally absurd, an infinite Number of necessarily existent Beings, as many as there are real Beings in the World; or else they must allow however difficult to conceive, that there must be a creative Power. For if there be no such thing as a Power of making real Existences, all particular Beings, supposing them to be real, must exist necessarily, which is absurd.

I come now to consider another Difficulty, which the *Atheist* makes in Excuse for not believing a God, which is, that it would oblige him to believe that Evil may be reconcil'd with the Supposal of a good Being. And am to shew, that all the Ways the *Atheist* takes to account for Good and Evil, are impossible to be true. And, therefore, he is an unfair Examiner in rejecting Religion for the Sake of this Difficulty.

And, I will begin with *Spinoza's* Account, from whence he is to draw both Good and Evil.

If there was in the World nothing but natural and moral Good, or nothing but natural and moral Evil, there would be no Difficulty in deriving either of them from one single Principle; but as there is an evident Mixture of both in the World, *Spinoza* judged it to be impossible, that such a Mixture should arise from a good Principle, and, therefore, erects a new System with a material God at the Head of it, that should neither be good nor evil, but in its own Nature indifferent to both, such a Being then acting necessarily according to its Nature, which Nature is supposed to be perfectly indifferent as Good and Evil, and acting by an infinite Power,

Power, must produce all the Possibilities of Being. And, therefore, since Errors and Crimes, Grief and Pain, are as real Modifications of Being, as Truth and Virtue, Pleasure and Happiness, consequently one, as well as the other, must have a Place in the Universe. For this Principle being in its own Nature indifferent, either to Good or Evil, and producing all that is possible to be produc'd, it must of Course, produce Evil as well as Good.

We will see now, whether it was worth *Spinoza's* while to quit Religion to get rid of that Question, If a good God, *πῶθεν τὰ κακά?* I own his infinite Being should produce all Possibilities of Being; but it looks like a Contradiction to draw out of the same simple uncompounded Substance, both Wisdom and Folly, Virtue and Vice, Happiness and Misery. And yet, if this Account could be true, these must all flow from the Essence of the self-existent Being.

But this is not all; here is is not only a Difficulty of giving Birth to both Good and Evil, from such a single Principle, but also of freeing such a Principle from the Contradiction of being at the same Time happy and miserable, as often as Men, or any other Beings, are in these Circumstances; which is always the Case of some or other of them; or if they are only Modes of the divine Being, differing only in the Manner of its Existence, the divine Being must be at least equally affected in the one as in the other Case.

There is also another Absurdity chargeable upon *Spinoza's* System, *viz.* that all the foolish and wicked Thoughts of Men, as well as those that are good, must be the Thoughts of the self-existent Being. But so long as we see a real Difference between good Sense and Foolishness, Virtue and Vice, we can never see how such incompatible Properties can flow from the same Principle. For this would be
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314 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
to make a most simple Being, to be compounded of
such inconsistent Ingredients, as could never be
united together.

But then, it may be said, why may not this be
true, as well as what the Christian Religion suppo-
ses to be true, *viz.* that the same Person may be the
Subject of both human and divine Attributes? For
human Wisdom, when compar'd with divine Wis-
dom, is no better than Folly: And, if this be true, then
the Subject of both Natures must be, at the same
Time, divinely and humanly wise, that is, wise and
not wise; and if these Things can be supposed by
the religious Man to exist in God, why not by the
Spinosist in his self-existent Being.

To which I answer, That when God took upon
him human Nature, that human Nature was per-
fectly submitted to the divine, no contrary Voliti-
ons, no Conflict between God and Man, but the
Word directed, and the Man followed; there was
no Clashing between the divine and human Nature:
If the Wisdom of the latter was less extensive, yet
it was without any Mixture of Folly. Whereas,
I objected against *Spinoza's* System, because it in-
troduced a Nature which was a perfect Scene of
Contention and Inconsistency, as it was evident
from the many *rational* and *foolish* Thoughts of Men,
which are a Contradiction, when they are made to
be at the same Time the Thoughts of the same Be-
ing. And yet his self-existent Being, so long as he
supposes him to be the only Being in the World,
must be chargeable with all the foolish as well as ra-
tional Thoughts of Men.

Having shewn, that *Spinoza's* Hypothesis is so far
from giving a better Account of that Mixture of
Good and Evil in the World, than the religious
Scheme, that it by no Means introduces any such
Mixture into the World;

I come now to shew, that no other Atheistic
Scheme ought to be taken up by any impartial Exa-
miner,

miner, because every other Atheistic Scheme, different from that of *Spinoza*, will suppose more than one necessary existent Principle; but a Plurality of self-existent Beings is contradictory to the clearest Ideas we have of the Order of Things. All the real Perfections that Men have ever had any Notion of, they have been wont to give to the self-existent Being; they were sure that something must be infinite and eternal, and these Perfections they constantly ascribed to the self-existent Being; for the Excellency of such a Nature must be, according to our Conceptions, if any Thing be so, entitled to all possible Perfections; but then, 'tis very hard to conceive two such Beings with all these Powers.

Till then the Atheist can tell us how to provide a Reception for a second Infinite, we must beg Leave to affirm, that he has a greater Difficulty upon his Hands, than the religious Man has, when he is called upon to account for Good and Evil upon the Foot of a good God.

But farther, The Idea of Power sticks close to our Idea of the self-existent Being, and yet our Ideas will not allow of dividing the Power between two, because this would be to admit two Powers that could control one another, which gives us a faint Idea of Power, too limited to be given to a necessarily existent, and infinite Being. For, in this Case, neither of the self-existent Beings would be able to produce any one Thing without the Interposition of the other. And, therefore, every Being in the World would be the Effect of their opposing one another, and so receive its Nature from both.

Some have discovered a Fondness for two contrary and independent Principles, hoping by them to account for the Mixture of Good and Evil in the World. But, however fond they may be of this Way of solving the Difficulty, they may do well to consider, whether the ascribing to the necessarily-
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ly-existent Being, such a limited Power, as contradicts our clearest Ideas, be not a better Proof of the Falshood of this *Hypothesis*, than any Arguments they can bring against the Being of a God from their *Phænomenon* of Good and Evil. The first I have shewn cannot be true; the last may possibly be true tho' we cannot clear the Difficulties that attend it. But,

2dly, I will not shew, that supposing there are two such independent Principles, yet they would not, any more than *Spinoza's* System, account for the Appearances of Good and Evil in the World.

Supposing then these two independent Principles, they must either have an equal or unequal Force. If they were unequal Powers, then the superior Power acting necessarily, and to the utmost of its Power, must, in an eternal Duration, have destroyed all the Effects of the weaker Power; and then, if the superior Power were good, there could be no such Thing as Evil; or if evil, no such Thing as Good. But,

2dly, If we take two contrary Principles of equal Force to account for Good and Evil, then, as they act necessarily, and to the utmost of their Powers, their continual Opposition must either produce nothing but Confusion, and destroy the Operations of each other; or else an equal Mixture of Good and Evil must run thro' all Things, as the necessary Result of the Equality of their Opposition: And, if this were the Case, there must be an invariable and uniform Appearance of Good and Evil; the Mixture of Good and Evil must be the same in every Part of Space, as well as every Part of Time, because it proceeds from two contrary Causes acting necessarily, and to the utmost of their Powers. But if the same Quantity of Good and Evil had been blended together from Eternity, and uniformly diffused thro' the infinite Extension, there could have been no such Thing as human Conduct or Wisdom

dom, no Possibility of choosing the less Evils to avoid greater, because the Inconveniences must be equal, which Way soever we act, if the Evil be equal, or as much in every Part of infinite Space as the Good is.

But if the real State of Things proves, that there is more Evil in one Way of acting, than in another, this shews, that the Mixture of Good and Evil did not proceed from two contrary Principles acting necessarily, but from one free and intelligent Being, that has judiciously annex'd different Degrees of Evil, to different Ways of acting, in order to make a Trial of our good Sense in choosing the least Inconveniences. In this Way of accounting for Good and Evil, we can suppose them mixed together, and yet leave Room for the Exercise of good Sense: Because a Being that acts with every Degree of Liberty, which is consistent with acting wisely, may so order Things, as to leave it in the Power of some Beings, if not entirely to separate the Evil from the Good; yet, at least, when there are different Degrees of Evil, to take the lesser: Whereas, if Good and Evil proceeded from two different and contrary Causes, acting necessarily with all their Force, it could never be in the Power of any particular Beings, such as Men, to alter so far the original Constitution of Things, as to take Good without taking an equal Portion of Evil; because it cannot be supposed, that what has been joined together by two infinite Powers, can possibly be separated by Man. But since all allow a Difference between wise and foolish Conduct, the Appearance of Good and Evil, such as it really is, cannot possibly be reconciled by an *Hypothesis* of two contrary Principles acting necessarily.

Again, the unequal Allotment of Good, and Evil to some Sorts of Men cannot receive a Solution from two contrary Principles; for Beings that act necessarily, it must be granted, cannot be Respected

318 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
ters of Persons, but must disperse their Favours or
Resentments promiscuously. This *Lucretius*, Lib.
V. could not deny; and, therefore, when he comes
to that Part of Nature, which relates to the Dis-
pensation of Good and Evil, he acknowledges, that
this was not to be accounted for by any Laws of
Matter and Motion; he drops his Atoms when he
speaks of the Misfortunes of great Men, and has
Recourse to I know not what hidden Power, that
took a Delight in making a Jest of all human Gran-
deur. [*Lucret. Lib. V. v. 1232.*]

If the religious Man meets with some Difficulty
in reconciling the Misfortunes of great and good
Men with a good Being, yet nothing has been
thought clearer, than that something, besides the
necessary Laws of Matter and Motion, must have
had a Hand in human Affairs. There were always
so many unaccountable Changes in the History of
great and good Men, that it has been thought ne-
cessary to have Recourse to some free Agent that
governs all Events: For 'twas easily seen, that the
Workings of necessary Agents must be as unchange-
able as their Natures. And, therefore, a more re-
gular Course of human Affairs, than the present,
must have arisen from the Action of a Being, or Be-
ings, that brought Things from a Necessity of Na-
ture.

Having consider'd some of the most material Ob-
jections against the Being of a God, and shewn,
that they cannot be a good Reason for denying him,
because the Appearance of Things will necessarily
require the Existence of such Powers and Proper-
ties, as we ascribe to him; I am now to represent
some of the Arguments on which the religious Man
grounds his Belief of a God, drawn from the most
considerable *Phænomena* in Nature, such as Motion,
Thought, and the Order of Things.

First, Motion, for the Existence of which there
is no possible Way to account, unless we will admit
of

of a God, or which is the same Thing to the *Atheist*, a Being distinct from Matter.

There are but three Ways of accounting for Motion.

1. Either by supposing, that there has been an infinite Succession of Impulses communicated from one Body to another from Eternity, without any active Principle either *in* Matter or *without* it. Or,

2. That Motion is essential to Matter; or else,

3. That there is some Being distinct from Matter, that is the Cause of its Motion. But,

1. An infinite Succession of Impulses, without a moving Principle, will never give Birth to Motion, because this would be to bring an Effect upon the Stage without the Help of a Cause. Nor,

2. Is Motion essential to Matter.

Mr. *Toland's* Arguments to prove the Activity of Matter are these:

(1.) "Because, says he, Motion, as well as Extension and Solidity, is included in our Idea of Matter, that whenever we separate Motion from Matter in our Idea of it, 'tis only a partial Consideration of it, or an abstracted Notion of the Mind; and, therefore, no Proof that Matter can exist without Motion."

(2.) Another Reason he urges for the Activity of Matter, is, "Because, in Fact all Matter is in Motion."

(3.) A third Reason is this: "That tho' there should be some Objection against it, that much greater ones would lie against an external Mover of Matter."

In Answer to these Arguments, I will shew,

1st, That our Idea of Matter, when we leave Motion out of it, is no abstracted Notion of the Mind, but a compleat Idea of it.

2^{dly}, That tho' all Parts of Matter were in Motion, it would not follow, that Motion was essential to Matter.

3^{dly},

3dly, That the Activity of Matter is inconsistent with some Appearances in Nature.

4thly, That the Objections against God's being the Author of Motion, are not such as should discourage any rational Person from acknowledging, that 'tis in God we live.

1st, I am to shew, that our Idea of Matter, without Motion, is not a partial Consideration of Matter, but a compleat Idea of it.

The Reason which has always determin'd the World to look out for a Cause of Motion extrinsecal to Matter, was this, tho' they could easily conceive it capable of being moved and divided, yet the conceiving it to be undivided and unmoved, was a more simple Notion of Matter, than the conceiving it divided and moved. This being first in Order of Nature, and an adequate Conception of it too, they thought it necessary to enquire, how it came out of this State, and by what Causes Motion, from whence this Diversity in Matter arose, could come into the World. And they could not account for it any other Way than by introducing another infinite Being, viz. a God, to rouse it out of its inactive State. But tho' the Evidence against the Activity of Matter, from its Idea, is so clear, yet Mr. Toland has attempted to prove Matter an active Being from its Idea.

As, *First*, "From the Divisibility of Matter, which, always makes a Part of our Idea of it." And,

2dly, "Because our Idea of Matter always contains some Quality, which necessarily supposes Motion."

First, From the Divisibility of Matter.

His Argument from hence is founded upon this; because, as he supposes, we cannot conceive Divisibility without Motion; therefore, we cannot conceive Matter, which is always conceived as divisible, without conceiving Motion as inseparable from Matter.

Matter. But this is to make a Capacity of receiving Motion, and Motion itself, to be the same Ideas. For tho' we cannot conceive Matter to be actually divided without adding Motion to our Idea of Matter; yet nothing more than a Capacity of receiving Motion is necessary to the making up our Idea of Divisibility. For we can conceive a Thing to be divisible, tho' it should never be actually divided; and, therefore, Motion is not necessarily included in our Idea of a Divisibility of Matter. And, consequently, to say, that Divisibility makes a Part of our Idea of Matter, would be no Proof that Motion too must belong to our Idea of it.

But Mr. *Toland* goes further, and would prove, that Motion must necessarily be included in the Divisibility of Matter, because whatever is divisible, must have within itself a Power of dividing itself. "If there was, says he, no *internal* Energy, Matter would be incapable of Division." But this cannot be proved, unless he takes it for granted, that there is nothing but Matter in the World, which would be begging the Question in Dispute. For if any Thing besides Matter had an Existence, he might have conceived Matter to be divisible, without thinking of an internal Energy of Matter, because it would be as truly divisible, tho' divided by something else, as if we suppose it divided by itself, and the Idea of Divisibility would be just the same, as to what he says, "That Motion is contain'd in our Idea of Matter." Because,

2^{dly}, "Our Idea of Matter always contains some Quality, which necessarily supposes Motion."

If by an Idea, he means an Image, or what may be an Object of our Senses, 'tis agreed, we can form no Idea of Matter divested of all Qualities; but this is only to say, that we can't form an Image of a Thing, which has no Image; but still the Idea of solid Extension remains a distinct Idea from that of

Motion, and, therefore, from all the Qualities that are a Consequence of Motion; which shews, that there is nothing in the Nature of the Thing that should have hinder'd Matter from existing without Motion. Mr. *Toland* himself acknowledges, "That Motion is not included in the Idea of Extension." And therefore if we can have any Idea of Solidity, a solid extended Substance may be conceived to exist without Motion, or without any Qualities that shall affect our Senses. Whereas there is no conceiving Matter to exist without Solidity and Extension, which shews *them* to be essential to Matter, and at the same Time shews Motion not to be essential. And therefore he has begged the Question in dispute, in adding to the Idea of Matter a new Attribute, without any Proof that it is one. But,

2dly, Another Argument he brings for the Activity of Matter is, "That in Fact all Matter is in Motion."

And supposing it true, it would not prove that Motion is an essential Attribute of Matter: For if Motion is not included in our Idea of Matter, as I have shewn, but we can as well conceive it at Rest, tho' there should be no Bodies at Rest, it would not follow, that Motion is essential to Matter, but, on the contrary, we ought to look some where else, than in Matter, for a Cause of its Motion: And as 'tis proved to be foreign to our Idea to look abroad for a powerful Cause, such as God, that had impress'd Motion upon Matter. But Mr. *Toland* says further, "Seeing every Part of Matter is in Motion, you should conclude, that Motion is essential to the Whole, for the same Reason, that you think Extension to be so, because every Part is extended." But the Case is different, because Extension is confessedly included in our Idea of Matter, whereas Motion is not so. Besides, if Mr. *Toland* reasons justly, the Universality of Motion can

can be no Proof of its being essential to Matter, because he allows centripetal Force to be universal; and yet he does not allow that particular Determination which we call Gravity to be essential to Matter; and, therefore, Motion may belong to every Part of Matter, and not to be essential to it: It may be universal, and yet proceed from an external Cause. But,

3^{dly}, Motion cannot be essential to Matter, for these three Reasons.

First, Because there could be no such Thing as Bodies, or any Concretions of Matter.

2^{dly}, Because there could be no Variation as to the Quantity of Motion, if all Matter was self-Active.

3^{dly}, Because Bodies of equal Bulk do yet weigh unequally.

First, Because there could be no such Thing as Concretions of Matter, if Matter was self-active.

The present State of Matter appears to us to be divided into *Æther*, and an infinite Number of large Combinations of Matter floating in that *Æther*; whereas, if Matter had been self-active, it could never have concerted such Globes, as the Stars and Planets, but must have every where appeared in the highest State of Fluidity, as fine as the present *Æther* in which they swim. For if Motion were essential to Matter, it must belong to the smallest Part of it, and, consequently, must be equally spread thro' the whole Mass of Matter, and then no possible Reason is to be given why some Parts of Matter should be more divided than others, since every Atom must equally partake of the dividing Principle. But,

2^{dly}, Matter cannot be self-active, because there could be no Variation of Motion: For if Motion be essential to every Particle of Matter, no one Particle of Matter can any otherwise lose its Motion, but by losing its Being; and yet, 'tis evident, as Sir *Isaac Newton* says, that,
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part of the original and direct Force which is con-

trary to Experience. (See *Clarke's Letters to Leibnitz*.)

And I cannot but observe, from the Loss of ina-

animate Motion, that as the original Laws of Mo-

tion could never have taken Place, unless there did

exist something superior to Matter, that had im-

pressed those Laws of Motion upon it; so those

Laws could never have continued, unless there were

an active Being in Nature, that was always ready

to exert upon Matter a certain Force or Activity, in

Proportion as the Motion was diminish'd; which

proves the Existence of a Being, that not only gave

Motion to Matter, but also of a Being, that still

continues to repair the Weakning by Time of the

first Impression of Motion; and this shews the Ne-

cessity of admitting a Governor of the World, who

by his Providence may interpose to preserve it, as

well as of an original Author of Motion, and of

this World, which is an Effect of a wonderful Di-

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for Infidelity. 323

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3dly, A third Reason that demonstrates the Inac-
tivity of Matter is, that Bodies of equal Bulk do
yet weigh unequally.

For if there is no accounting for this *Phænomenon*, without supposing the heavier Body to contain
more Matter than the lighter one of the same Bulk,
then 'tis plain, that Matter must be an inactive Be-
ing, since the encreasing the Quantity of Matter in
any Body, tho' there be no Increase of its Surface,
by which its Motion might be retarded, shall in-
crease the Difficulty of putting it into Motion. The
Infidel cannot reconcile this *Phænomenon* of Na-
ture with the mechanical Laws of Motion; for 'tis
certain, that all mechanical Causes do act in Propor-
tion to the Surfaces of the Particles they act upon;
whereas 'tis as certain that Gravity, whatever be the
Cause of it, acts proportionally to the Quantity of

“ What by the Tenacity of fluid Bodies, the wear-
 “ ing of their Parts, and the necessary impairing of
 “ the elastic Force in solid Bodies, the Quantity of
 “ Motion must diminish rather than increase, unless
 “ the Loss of Motion be repaired by an active Be-
 “ ing, that can supply those Losses.” And he is
 supported in his Persuasion by Matter of Fact, as in
 the Case of two hard Bodies of equal Force, that
 are not elastical; when such Bodies meet they lose
 all their Motion, which cannot be dispersed
 among the Parts of such Bodies, because the
 Parts of such Bodies are incapable of any tre-
 mulous Motion for Want of Elasticity. And if
 it should be denied that the Parts of those Bodies
 would lose the Motion of their Wholes, there is
 this Argument against it, That it would then fol-
 low that Bodies perfectly hard and elastical would
 reflect with a double Force, *viz.* the Force arising
 from the Elasticity, and moreover all, or at least,
 Part of the original and direct Force which is con-
 trary to Experience. (See *Clarke's Letters to Leibnitz.*)

And I cannot but observe, from the Loss of ina-
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 Proportion as the Motion was diminish'd; which
 proves the Existence of a Being, that not only gave
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that that Notion that God had impressed a certain Quantity of Motion upon Matter at the Creation, and then left it to shift for itself, cannot be true; because we have shewn, that the Quantity of Motion must diminish, unless there was some active Being that could keep it up in the same State. And if the inanimate Part of the World could not have been preserved in Motion, without the continued Action of some Being putting forth its Force according to those original Laws of Motion, much less could the Bodies of Plants and Animals be form'd and preserved by Matter directed at first according to any whatever Laws of Motion. From hence too it appears that God does not act as an *Anima Mundi*, nor as a Part, but as Governor of this World; because such a Being would be nothing but Fate and Nature, which can never be reconciled with the apparent Diminution of the Quantity of Motion in the Universe: As Fate or Nature must always act to the utmost of their Powers; and therefore if the Effect of their Activity could be at any Time abated, it could never be repaired again. But,

3^{dly}, A third Reason that demonstrates the Inactivity of Matter is, that Bodies of equal Bulk do yet weigh unequally.

For if there is no accounting for this *Phænomenon*, without supposing the heavier Body to contain more Matter than the lighter one of the same Bulk, then 'tis plain, that Matter must be an inactive Being, since the encreasing the Quantity of Matter in any Body, tho' there be no Increase of its Surface, by which its Motion might be retarded, shall increase the Difficulty of putting it into Motion. The Infidel cannot reconcile this *Phænomenon* of Nature with the mechanical Laws of Motion; for 'tis certain, that all mechanical Causes do act in Proportion to the Surfaces of the Particles they act upon; whereas 'tis as certain that Gravity, whatever be the Cause of it, acts proportionally to the Quantity of

solid Matter, without any Regard to the Superficies of the Bodies ; so as Bodies, which are the same in Bulk, shall be very different in their Weight. *Lucretius* [*Lib. I.*] saw that there was no accounting for the different Gravity of Bodies of equal Bulk without a *Vacuum*, and supposing a greater Quantity of Matter in the heavier Body. He, indeed, weakly supposes Gravity to be an inherent Quality in Matter, and that all Bodies had a natural Tendency downwards ; tho' there is no such Thing as upwards and downwards in an infinite Space. But however he says evidently, that the general Activity of Matter would not account for this *Phænomenon* without admitting Gravity. He believed his Atoms had been in Motion eternally, but did not think *that* Motion sufficient to account for the Gravitation of Bodies towards a Centre.

Let us now see how *Toland* would derive this Affection of Matter, *viz.* of moving towards a Centre, from the general Action of Matter ; or how he would account for the *unequal* Resistance of Bodies of *equal* Bulk. 'Tis plain that all mechanical Causes act by Contact, and upon the Surface of Bodies ; and 'tis plain that Gravity acts otherwise, and affects the solid Contents of Bodies, by penetrating the very Substance of them ; and therefore can never be produced by the general Action of Matter, because that is supposed to act superficially, as all mechanical Causes are wont to do. But supposing it possible to derive Gravity from the general Action of Matter, it would do *Toland* no Service, because he cannot avoid making an Increase of Gravity, and consequently of Resistance to Motion, to depend upon an Increase of Matter : For he supposes the centripetal Force to be one of the Modes of *Action* in general, or a particular Determination of the general Activity of Matter. Let it be so ; since 'tis evident, that the Quantity of Motion in the Body must be the Sum of the motive

tive Forces of all the Particles of Matter that are in that Body; if this centripetal Force be only a particular Determination of the general Action of Matter, there would be no giving a Reason, why the Quantity of that Force, or of that particular Determination too, should not be computed after the same Manner, and be the Sum of all the self-moving Atoms in any Body; the Consequence of which would be, that whenever we observed two Bodies of equal Bulk and Gravity unequally, or tending towards a Centre with unequal Force, if we would account for such a *Phænomenon*, consistently with *Toland's* Account of Gravity, we must say, that one of the Bodies had a greater Number of self-moving Atoms than the other, which necessarily supposes in the lighter Body a Space void of Matter, which levels one of the strongest Retrenchments of the *Infidel*, viz. the Infinity of Matter, and at the same Time its Activity; because Experience tells us, that the more weighty any Body is, tho' nothing be added to its Bulk, the more it resists to Motion; whereas if Matter was an active Being, an Increase of its Quantity could never increase its Resistance, unless its Surface, by which alone Bodies could be retarded, was increased too. All that *Toland* has to say for himself is, "That this
 " Difference of Resistance in Bodies of equal Bulk,
 " may possibly arise from the different internal Con-
 " texture of those Bodies"; and all the Reason for such a Suspicion is drawn from the great Resistance that some Fluids are observed to make above others, tho' of near the same specific Gravity, and consequently near the same Quantity of Matter; which can be resolved into nothing but a Difference in the internal Contexture of such Fluids: But this Plea can have Force only in such Bodies as are equally fluid. For whatever be the Figure of the internal Parts of Fluids, if they are equally devoid of Tenacity, their Force of Resistance to any parti-

328 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
cular Determination, as well as the absolute Force
of Motion, can be only the Sum of the Forces of
the self-moving Particles in those Bodies. And
therefore if a cubical Inch of Water, and the same
Quantity of Quick-silver, which are fluid Bodies,
and free from Tenacity, did really contain the same
Number of self-moving Particles, whatever were the
Figure of those Particles, they would equally resist
to any Change that should be made of the Determination of their Motion. But as Experience shews
this to be false; consequently, that Fluid which
makes the greatest Resistance to Motion, must have
the greatest Quantity of Matter; and then the different internal Contexture of Bodies will not account
for their different Weights, nor clear Matter from
the Imputation of being inactive. I come now,

4thly, To consider the Difficulties that are raised against God's being the Author of Motion. Which are these,

1st, That we cannot conceive how an immaterial Being, such as God is supposed to be, can move Matter.

2dly, That if it were possible for him to be the Author of Motion, he must be the Author of all the Wickedness that Men do.

The first Objection is grounded upon this, That nothing but Matter can move Matter.

This is proved thus; ; " That the Mobility of
" Matter, or its Capacity of receiving Motion is
" wholly founded upon its Impenetrability or Resistance; by the Means of which 'tis qualified
" for hindering any Thing from coming into its
" Place, 'till 'tis removed out of it; and consequently
" ly the active Principle must be a material Being,
" because Matter could make no Resistance to the
" Action of a Being that was not material, and
" therefore could not be moved by it, as there
" can be no Action without a Re-action or
" Resistance

“Resistance on the Part of Matter.” To which I answer, that tho’ this Argument should hold good in all mechanical Communications of Motion from one Parcel of Matter to another, yet it would be nothing to the Purpose, unless all Causes must be mechanical ones. Supposing such a Thing as Motion, which our *Atheists* won’t deny, we have made it evident, that an infinite Series of Impulses, without any original Cause of those Impulses, is Nonsense; and also that the Self-activity of Matter is inconsistent with some Appearances in Nature; the Difficulty therefore of conceiving how an immaterial Being acts upon Matter, will by no Means prove he does not.

But farther we have seen, that there is a Principle of Action, in Virtue of which Bodies act upon one another in a different Way from what they do by the mechanical Laws of Motion, *viz.* Gravitation, which penetrates the solid Substances of Bodies; and therefore its Action cannot be founded upon the Impenetrability of Matter, or the Resistance it makes to it, it going beyond the Surface of Bodies. Whereas the Argument against an immaterial Being’s acting upon Matter is founded upon this Supposition, that there can be no Action upon Bodies but by Contact, and the consequent Resistance that Body makes to such an Impulse; which being false, the Argument drawn from it can be of no Moment.

But this is not all; ’tis as great a Difficulty to conceive how Matter acts upon Matter, as in conceiving how an immaterial Substance should act upon a material one. For we can as easily conceive, that an immaterial Being may act upon Matter without corporeal Contact, as that an Impulse upon a Part of the Body shall move the whole Body: For nothing can account for this, but the Adhesion of the Parts of the Body to each other, which is as much beyond our Conception of the divisible Nature of Matter as the Action of immaterial upon material; and

330 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
and the Difficulty would encrease, if we should suppose with Mr. Toland, that every Particle of Matter was self-active; because then all Matter would be a State of Fluidity.

2dly, The other Objection against God's being the Author of Motion is this; that then he must be Author of all the Wickedness of Men.

The Strength of which Objection must be founded upon the Truth of this Supposition, That if God were the original Author of Motion, no other Being could have this Power of moving Matter; either because this Power is incommunicable; or at least, that Man is incapable of receiving it: If neither of these be true, the Objection is false.

As to the first Reason: If we contended for a Power of acting independently upon God, we might be thought to plead for a Power which could not be disposed of, because there cannot be two independent Beings; but when we contend for a Power of Self-motion in Man, wholly depending upon the first Mover for its Continuance, no Reason can be given why such a Power as this may not be communicated.

2dly, As to the other Reason, that granting some Degree of this Power might be communicated, that yet Man is incapable of receiving it; 'tis confessed, that God cannot give any Powers to a Being, that is inconsistent with its Nature; as for Instance, he cannot give a Power to Matter of moving itself, because Matter is essentially inactive, and consequently such a Power would make it cease to be what it is. And if Man was altogether a material Being, the Argument might be just. But as I have shewn that the Author of Motion cannot be a material Being, the *Atheist* can never prove that there cannot exist other Beings besides him, that are not material, and which may therefore be capable of receiving from God a Power of moving themselves, or beginning Motion.

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The Atheist perhaps will say, that if the Immateriality of an Infinite Being be conceivable, yet the Immateriality of a finite one is not; because 'tis not easy to see what an immaterial Being should be confined by, or what should separate one immaterial Being from another. If we suppose them to be distinguish'd from one another by the different Systems of Matter they animate, we must suppose something unintelligible, because Matter has no Relation to an immaterial Being, and therefore not that of terminating its Essence, and by Consequence we must be mistaken in accounting for human Actions by an immaterial Principle; and then 'tis already granted, that God must be the sole Cause of all a Man's Actions, and therefore of his Wicked ones too.

To avoid the Force of this Argument, some have fallen into a Notion of an *Anima Mundi*, that inform'd the Bodies of all Animals; and consequently all that which we call particular Souls, was the same Soul in different Individuals. But nothing can be more evident than this, that whatever it is that thinks in several Individuals, it cannot be the same in them all, because that which thinks in each Individual, thinks only for itself, and knows nothing of what passes in another, and therefore cannot be the same: For Consciousness will be as necessary to the Identity of a thinking Being, as the same Particles of Matter can be to constitute the same material Being.

But in answer to the Difficulties of supposing Souls to be immaterial, and yet distinct Portions of Immateriality, it is sufficient to say, that immaterial Beings may be separated from each other, tho' we could not conceive what should separate them: For if our Ignorance of a Thing could be a good Argument against it, then the Difficulty of conceiving the Action of immaterial upon material, would prove there could be no such Thing; but we have shewn it must be true with Regard to one immaterial Being, viz. God, and no one will say, that there

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332 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
is any more Difficulty in conceiving the Limitation of immaterial Beings, than there is in conceiving this very Action of immaterial upon material. The limited Nature therefore of an human Soul ought no more to be urg'd, as a Proof of its being material, than its acting upon an human Body be brought as an Argument to prove it a Body too. Since then the Soul may be immaterial, consequently God may have communicated to it a Power of Self-motion; and Man, and not God, will be the immediate Cause of all the evil Actions that are committed by him.

Having shewn that there is no introducing Motion into the World, without the Help of a Being distinct from Matter, it would be plain enough, that without such a Being, no such Thing as Thought or Intelligence could ever have had an Existence. For if Motion be necessary for the making Matter an intelligent Being, as it must be if *Spinoza's* or *Hobbs's* Notion of Perception which places it in the Action and Re-action of Bodies upon one another, were the Truth, then Intelligence could not be an essential Attribute of Matter, unless Motion was so too; and therefore they must have some external Cause of its Being. This would be sufficient to shew, that *Spinoza's* Notion concerning the Existence of Intelligence, is unphilosophical, because in such Case, Cogitation would be made to rise from nothing, unless he could believe this Absurdity, viz. That Thought and Extension were the same Thing; or that Extension, whether in Motion or at Rest, was endued with Perception. Altho' if we can judge of the Nature of Intelligence from our own Perceptions, we must observe the Action of external Objects to be necessary to our having any actual Perception of what passes without us. *Toland* was so sensible of this, that he gives up *Spinoza* as a Person not to be defended upon this Account. And yet as unphilosophical as it is to make Thought arise from still and inactive Matter, it will appear as absurd to pump
Sense

Sense out of Senseless, tho' active Matter. Yet *Toland* must do this, or confess that there is some intelligent Being that is the Cause of all intelligence.

There are but three Ways of accounting for the Existence of Thought or intelligence.

1st, Either by supposing it an essential Attribute of Matter. Or,

2^{dly}, In supposing it an Effect of the Motion of Objects on some particular Arrangement of the Parts of Matter; such as is seen in the Bodies of Animals; or,

3^{dly}, That there is in all intelligent Beings a Principle distinct from Matter, from whence Thought arises.

The two first of which Ways I will shew to be false.

1st, I will shew that Thought cannot be essential to Matter.

That which made *Spinoza* advance the Essentiality of Thought to Matter was, that he thought that he could not be disproved in his Assertion, because we did not sufficiently know the Nature of Intelligence to determine concerning the Subject of Thought; and therefore Matter might be the Subject of it, for any Thing we could say to the contrary. But the answer is plain.

Tho' I do not know all I could wish concerning Thought, and the Subject of it, yet I may know that Thought is not Extension. But it must be Extension if it be an essential Attribute of Matter. I may be certain, I say, that Thought cannot be Extension, because to affirm this, would be just as if we should affirm, that any Consequence of Extension, such as a triangular or square Figure, and the Perception that the Mind has of such a Figure, were the same Thing: But the Ideas of the trine Dimension, and Thought, are so evidently different, that the Things represented by those Ideas cannot possibly be true, unless our Perceptions are mere Deceptions. It must then be granted me, that Thought and Extension cannot

cannot be the same Thing. And therefore we are to show that *Spinoza's* Notion of Thought's being essential to Matter, does by necessary Consequence make Thought and Extension the same Thing.

That there can be no real Difference between them may be made evident from this one Consideration, that supposing them really different, one of them must arise from nothing; for both Thought and Extension cannot be both necessarily existent, if there be any real Difference between them, any more than there can be two necessarily existent Beings. And yet, by this Scheme, Thought cannot be a Mode of Extension, or derivable from it, but must be equally self-existent with Extension. *Spinoza*, indeed, asserts, that the same numerical Substance may have an infinite Number of essential Attributes, and of these he names Thought and Extension, as different Attributes of the same Substance. But if the Difference he means be a real, and not a notional or modal Difference, the Substances of those different Attributes must be different too. And therefore if Thought and Extension were so united together as to constitute the same Essence, and not different Beings, they must be the same in reality: For if every Part of Matter be endued with Perception, and every Part of it be extended, unless Extension and Thought be of the same Nature, or one of them a Mode of the other, it will be impossible to conceive how they should constitute the same Substance or Being: There being no Room left for a real Difference, when every Part of Matter is supposed to be both extended, and intelligent.

That which led *Spinoza* into this Mistake was, his confounding notional Attributes with real ones; for the Oneness, the Immutability, and Infinity of God, which he has instanced in, [See *Spinos. Epist.* 78. p. 598, 599.] and which he calls Properties, do no more differ from each other, than as any other abstract Notions of the Mind do differ

fer from one another. For these Attributes of God are Properties necessarily flowing from a necessarily existent Nature, which shews them to be only partial Considerations, and not different Attributes of the divine Nature. Thus, for Instance, the Existence of the divine Nature may be considered without Regard to Time or Place; but this is plainly a partial Consideration, because infinite Time, and infinite Place, are the necessary Consequences of such an Existence, and therefore cannot be separated from it. Thus it appears, by these Instances of *Spinoza*, that he did not distinguish between real and notional Attributes. And, therefore, that he has not proved it possible for Thought and Extension to be Attributes of the same Substance, supposing them really different.

Nor, 2^{dly}, does Thought arise from Figure and Motion.

Tho' we do not know the Nature of Thought, nor all the Effects that arise from Matter in Motion, we may know enough of the Nature of Thought, and the Nature of Body, without knowing every Thing belonging to either, which may satisfy us, that Thought cannot possibly arise from Matter or Body. And if we do not know what Thought and Perception is, nor know all the Effects that may possibly arise from all the possible Ways of putting Matter together, yet we may know that Thought is not Figure, altho' we know not every Thing belonging to Thought and Figure.

1st, Because in our Conceptions of Things, we find a real Difference between Thought and Figure, or between local Motion, and the Perception of that Motion; and yet, unless Thought be Figure and Motion, it will be impossible for any Man alive to conceive that Thought should arise from either or both of them. If Extension or Matter was a thinking Being, we might then indeed conceive, that from a more or less curious Arrangement of the
Parts

Parts of Body, might arise more or less perfect Ways of thinking, stronger or fainter Degrees of Perception and Sensation. But these Men grant Matter as Matter, to be as senseless as we could wish for; they own there is no more Excellency in the Atoms that compose the Eye, than there is in any other Atoms, that are the farthest removed from any Thing like Life or Perception, and yet would vainly pretend, from a good Management of those Atoms, to derive Thought and Sensation. But let them prepare Matter as they will, so long as they confess it to be without Thought, they must have good Luck, if they make any Body believe, that a single Thought can ever be drawn out of her.

I can see no Way the Atheist has left for retaining his Opinion of Thought depending upon the proper Arrangement of the Parts of Body, unless he should say, that in this he supposes nothing more inconceivable, than what the religious Man supposes, when he ascribes to God Effects, that have no Kind of Similitude to him: And such confessedly are all material Effects, that 'tis as hard to conceive, that Matter should be derived from Thought, as that Thought should be wrought out of Matter. But the Answer is easy; for the religious Man does not suppose material Effects to have flowed from God, as from an emanative Cause, but to have been brought by him into Being from nothing; and therefore he is not obliged to look out for any Resemblance between the Cause and the Effect; whereas the *Atheist*, rejecting all creative Power, must look out for some such a Cause of the Existence of Beings, as may have some Kind of Resemblance with the Effects depending upon it: Otherwise he must introduce Beings into the World without a sufficient Reason for their Existence.

He will, perhaps, say that Colours, Sounds, and Tastes, are produced by Matter and Motion, and yet that there is as little Resemblance between

tween these Qualities and the Figure of Bodies, as there is between Thought and Figure. And this would be a just Objection, if Matter and Motion did really produce Colours and Sounds; but these are in the Bodies themselves nothing more than different Degrees of Motion arising from the different Contexture of those Bodies.

Having shewn, that there is no Possibility of drawing Thought out of Matter; I proceed now to shew,

2dly, That Unity of Thought, by which we find all our Sensations united in one thinking Being for many Years, could never arise from any compound Substance such as Matter is.

'Tis evident, that Man is one, not many thinking Beings; that amidst all his various Sensations and Perceptions, there is some one single Principle that is the Subject of all of them: 'Tis plain too there is something in Man that thinks for the Benefit of his whole System; from whence 'tis evident, that there must be a Principle of Individuation, whatever it be, that joins certain Parts of the human Fabrick together, and which thinks and acts for the Use of those Parts: The only Enquiry that wants to be made is, whether Matter, in any Shape, is capable of acting as a Principle of Individuation? And we are sure 'tis not capable, because which ever Atheistic Scheme we take, the Principle of Consciousness will be a compound Being. For to begin with *Spinoza's* Scheme, which makes every Particle of Matter to be cogitative, 'tis plain, there must be as many thinking Beings in Man as there are Particles in a human Body; for notwithstanding the Union of Parts in a Compound, the Parts still remain different, and, therefore, there must be good Reason for believing, that the Thoughts of those Parts could be no more united than the Parts themselves.

The other Scheme which would derive Thought

from some particular Organization of the Parts of Matter, is liable to the same Inconvenience. For every Organization of Matter being a Composition of Matter, will, for that Reason, be unable to furnish us with a single conscious Being. For the Union of Parts in a Compound is not an Union close enough to produce Unity of Thought; this requires the strictest of all Unions, *viz.* that by which Beings are united into a Sameness or Identity.

That such an Union as that of Identity is necessary to account for Unity of Thought, is evident from this Consideration, that without such an Unity in the Principle of thinking, we could never see the Whole of any Object whatsoever, because if the Soul was a Compound of many Parts, every Part would only receive a Part of the Image of an Object, and no Part receive the Whole; and, consequently, a Man could have no Image of the Whole of an Object, unless the Parts of the Soul could communicate to each other their Part of the Image. But there is no Ground for such a Supposition; because 'tis certain, that when any solid Body is put into Motion, every Part of the Body retains a certain Degree of Motion in Proportion to its Bulk, without communicating that Degree of Motion to any of the other Parts of the same Body. The *Atheist*, who owns the Relation between Thought and Motion, cannot except against this Argument, nor shew any Reason why one Part of Matter should communicate to another Part its Share of Thought, when there are no such Communications of Motion from the Parts of the Body to each other. But supposing it possible, that the whole Image of an Object might be impressed upon every one of those Parts that are the Subject of Thinking, there would be this Inconvenience attending such a Supposition, *viz.* there would be a double Image of every Object; for every Atom that constitutes the Subject of Thinking, would have the whole Image of the Object,

Object, and all the Atoms taken together, would have the same whole Image too, which is both superfluous, and inconceivable.

From hence we may observe the unfair Dealing of the *Atheist*, when he pretends the Difficulty of conceiving some Powers ascribed to God, as a Reason for his rejecting Religion, and yet submits to believe some of the most incredible Things in the World.

I come now to offer another Argument, why Thought cannot be an Effect of any Composition of Matter: Because we see the Consciousness of being the same thinking Being, not only continued with all the particular Sensations of the Body, but even carried thro' all the Changes of Organization, that must happen to the Body in the different Stages of a Man's Life. Those who place Thinking in every Particle of Matter, cannot tell how 'tis possible to continue the *same* thinking Being for twenty Years together, in which we shall have a new Set of Atoms, and how the same Consciousness can be preserved in a total Change of the Subject of Thinking.

If it be said, that Consciousness of being the same Person, depends upon our Memory, and that our Memory may deceive us; that we are not the same thinking Being that we were some Years ago, but only think that we are such; yet the *Atheist* would be obliged to shew some probable Reason of a Man's thinking himself the same Person, when he is not such; and this, I believe, would be as great a Difficulty as the other; for when the Subject of Thought is wholly changed (as we suppose) and a new one succeeds, there can be no more Reason for a Man's being conscious of what was done by his former self, than there would be for his being conscious of what was done by any other Person, his present Self having no Relation to his former one. And as to the second Account of solving human Thought by the

peculiar Organization of an human Body, this will as little account for the Sameness of Person in the different Stages of Life, as the former; for those who make Thought to depend upon the particular Arrangement of the Parts, must allow, that the Difference in a Man's Opinions and Inclinations, will depend upon the Difference of Organization; and yet a Man, when he has changed his Opinions and Inclinations, is yet fully persuaded, that he is still the same Person who held those different Opinions. But this would be impossible, if Organization was the Subject of Personality, because then every Change in the Organization must, of Necessity, produce a Change of Person; for 'tis impossible to conceive the Subject of Personality to be changed, and yet the Person continue the same.

According to the religious Man's Scheme of Things, this Diversity of Opinions and Practices in the different Parts of Life, is very conceivable, by supposing some Alteration made in those Organs of Sense, by the Means of which the Soul has Notice convey'd to it of what passes without it. This, I say, would be conceivable enough, were there no Difficulty in conceiving the Union of an immaterial Being with one that is material, which have no one Quality, internal or external, in which they resemble one another: And yet to find that whenever Body is affected by external Objects, that *Psyche* conceives a Thought, as if Body was the *natural Parent* of that Thought: That from the Motion of Matter in an human Body, Thought should as certainly arise, as if Thought was the genuine Offspring of Matter, and its Motion the real Cause of that Effect. These are great Difficulties, and yet we cannot allow them to be a sufficient Reason for rejecting an immaterial Soul, because we find there are many Difficulties in Nature, which the Atheist must allow as well as we; and, therefore, the fairest Way of determining,

is to weigh the Difficulties on both Sides, and then, I am sure, the Atheist will gain nothing by objecting the Difficulty in conceiving the Action of material upon immaterial: For if we have shewn it to be impossible that Thought should be Figure and Motion, or that it should be an essential Attribute of Matter, and that there is no other possible Way of accounting for Intelligence, unless they admit an immaterial Soul, there can be no Reason for suspending a Determination in such a Case.

But the *Sceptic* will, perhaps, put the Objection in this Manner: "That the Difficulty of conceiving the Operation of material upon immaterial, must be at least as great as that of conceiving Thought to arise from the Action of Matter, because supposing the last to be inconceivable, 'tis no more so than the former, which no Body pretends to understand; and if the Inconceivableness of it be no Reason for rejecting the Action of material upon immaterial; neither ought the Inconceivableness of Thought's arising from Matter, be a Reason for our rejecting a material Soul, because Matter being infinite, many Effects may arise from it that a finite Being cannot conceive; and then, why not Thought? If we think ourselves sure that Thought is not Figure and Motion, we may be as sure that Matter can have nothing to do with what is not Matter. Consequently, the Difficulties being equal, the *Sceptic* will say, there can be no sufficient Reason for determining the Question either Way."

In Answer to this, 'tis granted, we can neither conceive the Action of material upon immaterial; nor the producing Thought from Figure and Motion. But this is not all; we assert that it is impossible that Thought should be produc'd by Figure and Motion, because it is manifestly repugnant to our Conceptions. But I will defy the *Sceptic* to shew such a Repugnance in the Action of material

342 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
upon immaterial. For since we have proved, that
the Principle of Motion cannot be a material Be-
ing, then an immaterial Being must act upon a ma-
terial one. And if immaterial may act upon mate-
rial, it can never be proved impossible, that Matter
should act upon that which is not Matter. We can
as easily conceive that Thought should be a Conse-
quence of the Motion of Body upon an immateri-
al Soul, as that Motion in Body should be a Conse-
quence of *Volition*, which is the *supposed* Action of
an immaterial Being upon a material one. This be-
ing plain, a fair Examiner would conclude, tho' he
does not understand how 'tis, that the Action of
Matter, or Body upon the Soul, depended upon
the arbitrary Disposition of that God, who tho' im-
material himself, does move Matter, and was there-
fore able to unite material and immaterial in such a
Manner, that the Motions of the former should
affect the latter; and not, as the Atheist pretends,
that such a Difficulty as this, hinders him from see-
ing, that some simple Being is the Cause of Perso-
nality, or the Sameness of a thinking Being. We
have then gain'd the Existence of an immaterial
Soul in Man.

From hence we may observe, that the *Atheist*
cannot free himself from the Fears of a future State,
which was the principal Advantage, he proposed
to himself in quitting Religion: For if the Princi-
ple of Thinking cannot be a Being of a compound
Nature, he ought to tell us what makes such a Be-
ing leave off Thinking, as soon as his corporeal
Structure becomes unfit for continuing the vital
Functions. We can easily conceive an human Bo-
dy may be broken in Pieces, because its Parts, not-
withstanding their Union, are really different from
each other, and therefore will be capable of exist-
ing apart; whereas there is no conceiving any real
Difference in a simple Substance. Therefore as such
it must be incapable of being divested of any Quali-
ties

ties it is possessed of, and then the Dissolution of the Parts of an human Body will never infer a total Cessation of Thought in such a Being as Man.

If it be said, that since a Defect in certain Organs shall cause a Disorder in our thinking Faculty, why should not a total Destruction of all the Organs bring on the Death of the thinking Being. Or if an original or accidental Fault in any Sense, for Instance, Hearing, shall make us incapable of having any Thoughts of Sounds, why should not the entire Distinction of all the Organs of Sense put a final End to all our Thoughts? To which I answer, that if the Dependence, which the Principle of Thought has upon the Body in its Operations of Thinking, while it is united to it, can never be so good a Proof of its totally ceasing with the Body, as the Simplicity of the thinking Principle will be to prove that it has no separable Parts; by whose Separation from each other, the Whole might be supposed to exchange its thinking Quality for another that was not such. And therefore the Dissolution of a compound Being, such as an human Body, can never give the *Atheist* any reasonable Grounds for believing the Extinction of a simple Being, such as the Principle of Thought is proved to be. And as he allows not any Annihilations of Beings, he will never be able to tell us by what Means the thinking Principle in Man should lose its Faculty of Thinking. Thus the *Atheist* is disappointed, when he hopes by throwing off Religion to get quit of the Fears of an Hereafter.

2dly, Granting the *Spinosist* for once, that the Consciousness of a Man's being the same thinking Person, in all the different Parts of his Life, may be reconcil'd with the flux Nature of Body, and the Changes of its Materials, he would not thank me for the Concession; because there will be no destroying Thought, even in this Case, by destroying the Body. For supposing Thought to be Extensi-

on, then Death could not put an End to its Thinking, any more than it could to its Extension. And then such thinking Substances may be obnoxious to as great or greater Evils in another State than they are in this. For when the corporeal Particles, that compose the Atheist, are separated at his Death, they must still be capable of receiving Pleasure and Pain, if every Atom of Matter be thoughtful; and other Atoms, besides those that form a Man, may do him a Mischief. And then there may be thinking Substances in the Air and elsewhere, that may be as well qualified to do him a Mischief in a future State, as Atoms that compose the Thoughts of Men are in this present one.

If he says, that the thinking Atoms, of which his dead Carcass will consist, can have no more Relation to him than the Atoms of any other dead Body; and therefore he shall not be affected with any Sufferings of theirs. I would then ask him the Reasons he has for believing so, so long, I mean, as he believes the same conscious Being shall continue twice seven Years in a Man, when every Body knows that there is not a single Atom left of the old ones. If after these Changes the Man still feels, to his Grief, that he is the same Man now, in a Fit of the Gout, that he was ten Years past in a Fever, what Security can the Atheist have, that Death will end his Troubles? But perhaps the other Account of Thought, which places it in a particular Organization, may be espoused by some Persons, as a better Security against the Apprehensions of Evil in another World; as they think the Destruction of that particular Organization must carry with it a total Extinction of Thought, and consequently of Consciousness. Because if the Soul be nothing more than a Body, consisting of Parts of such a Figure, as is necessary to Life, when the Body loses that Figure, the Power of Thinking must be entirely lost with it. But even here is not so near a
total

total Cessation of Thought as the *Atheist* hopes for; for he must allow Thought to be one of the Modifications which the Body is capable of receiving; and then he must also acknowledge, that there is no destroying any Mode, without producing another of the same Kind. If it be said, that Motion is a Mode, and may be totally extinguish'd; and, therefore, why may not Thought? I answer, that Motion is not a Mode which depends upon Body for its Production; whereas the *Atheist* supposes Thought to depend entirely upon it. But of all such Modes as are founded upon the essential Attributes of any Substance, and derive their Modation from thence, it will be most true to affirm, that you may change one Mode for another of the same Sort, but you cannot destroy them all, no more than you can destroy the essential Attributes from whence they flow. And, therefore, tho' that particular Way, or Mode of Thinking, which belongs to the human Fabric may cease, yet we can see no Reason why all Sort of Thinking should cease, any more than why the Extinction of one particular Figure in Body should draw after it the Destruction of all Figure. This Reasoning will hold good, tho' Thought was not a Mode of Extension, but of some unknown Attribute of Matter, because it would be no more possible to destroy a Mode of that unknown Attribute, without generating another, than it would be in the Case of Extension.

But then the *Atheist* will say, that a different Mode will have no Concern with him, and he cannot be affected by any Sentiments of Pain, that his Body may be affected with in another State; I will allow him to be as positive in this as he pleases, when he is able to tell me, upon any Foot of Atheism, what makes him to be the same Person, when he believes Matter to be the Supreme and only Being, with that Self, who perhaps formerly believed an intelligent Creator. When he can reconcile
this

this Sameness of Person with all the Changes his Body has undergone, it will then be Time enough to grant, that the Thoughts of the dead Person may have no Concern with the living one. Till then the *Atheist* of this Scheme, no more than the *Spinosist*, can secure himself against the Fears of Evil in a future State; since he cannot prove a Cessation of Thought after Death, nor tell us what Change of Organization will certainly destroy Consciousness; or that such a Change must do it, so long as he allows Consciousness to keep Pace with all the Changes that happen to a Man in this Life. Thus then the *Atheist* must be a most unhappy Creature when he cannot live without God in *this* World, but he must be without Hopes too of being at Rest when he is out of it.

I come now to consider the *Atheist's* Arguments concerning the Works of Nature. The *Atheist* says, "That the greatest and best of all Beings, in the religious Man's Opinion, is no Effect of Wisdom; and therefore, why must the World, which he believes the best of Beings, be any Effect of Design; altho' the particular Works do arise from the Agency of some thinking Beings. That the religious Man believes God to be the most accomplish'd Being, and yet that he owes not his Accomplishments to any Wisdom, but is necessarily what he is; and therefore, why may not the Curiosity in the Works of Nature be an Effect of Necessity; tho' less perfect Works, such as those of Art, be an Effect of Thought and Counsel." In Answer to all which, I will shew,

I. That the Frame of the World cannot have its Existence from Necessity.

II. That there are plain Marks of Wisdom in those Parts of the World with which we are best acquainted; and therefore it must have been the Effect of some wise Being.

I. That the Frame of the World cannot have its Existence from Necessity; because,

1st, No compound Being, such as the World is, can have necessary Existence.

2^{dly}, Because there are plain Marks of an arbitrary and free Disposal in its Constitution; such an arbitrary Disposal, I mean, as is consistent with good Sense.

1st, Because no compound Being, such as the World is, can have necessary Existence.

The *Atheist's* Argument; That as God is supposed, by the religious Man, to be the wisest of all Beings, and yet to be no Effect of Wisdom, that therefore there may be great Appearances of Wisdom without any Cause of it, will amount only to this, that there must be something wise from the Necessity of its Nature; 'tis agreed, that there must be such a Being, otherwise there could be no such Thing as Wisdom; but the Question between us and the *Atheist* is, what Sort of Being this wise Being can be. The Being that the religious Man supposes to be necessarily existent is a most simple Being, and whose nature is for that Reason not subject to Alteration. The *Atheist's* necessarily existent Being is a compound one, a changeable Being, such as Matter and all its Compositions are. But the religious Man is persuaded, that a compound Being can never be reconcil'd with the Idea of necessary Existence; because every Composition may be conceived by us capable of being changed into some other; and therefore no Composition can be truly necessary; unless a Possibility of being, or not being, were consistent with Necessity.

2^{dly}, The Frame of the World cannot be the necessarily existent Being, because there are evident Marks of an arbitrary Disposal, I mean, such as is consistent with good Sense.

Whatever exists necessarily cannot be conceived to be any Thing but what it is. But the present
Face

348 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
Face of Things has all imaginable Variety; instead of one vast System, consisting of a great Number of uniform Bodies, with a Sun at the Centre of it, we have probably a great Number of Systems, and yet we can see nothing in the Nature of Matter that should determine it into this great Diversity of Systems, rather than into one. Nothing but Will and Pleasure could determine the Magnitude of the Earth, and Number of the Planets. We cannot resolve the different *Orbits*, in which the Planets and Comets of our System move, the one in elliptical, the other in parabolical Figures, into any Thing but the free Agency of some Being, who thought fit to impress a greater Quantity of Motion, or more of the projectile Force upon some Parcel of Matter than he did upon others.

Again; We must never look for a Reason in Necessity of the Earth's moving about its *Axis*, in a Motion oblique to its *Equator*; because its most simple Motion had been in an *Orbit* that was parallel to it; and that its Motion upon the *Ecliptick* is a Deviation from that simple Motion, and therefore the *Atheist* ought to give a Reason why the Earth must needs have been of such an outward Form, or have such a Difference of its inward Contexture, as might be the Cause of the Obliquity of its *annual* Motion to its *diurnal*; but that must be resolved into the Will of an intelligent Cause.

I know *Spinoza* says, that all Possibility of Being must of Necessity flow from the divine Nature, and consequently, that all Variety of Concretions, and Diversity of Motions, which we have instanced in, as Proofs of Freedom, are the Effects of Necessity; which he proves thus; he defines God to be a Being that consists of an infinite Number of Attributes, from which Infinity of Attributes there necessarily arises an Infinity of Things, infinitely varied in the Manner of their Existence. Which if we suppose to be true, yet no one can
give

give a Reason, why this particular Variety, of Beings should be more necessary than any other. For if every Possibility of Being must arise from the Motion of Matter infinitely varied, then the present Frame of the World must contain in it all that Variety, which 'tis possible to conceive; and yet nothing can be plainer than that the Mind does conceive it possible, that the Order of Beings might be different from the present Order. If the Atheist thinks Chance will account better for this Variety, he exposes his Ignorance; for if the Motions of Matter are not directed by a free Being, they must be pure mechanical Necessity, which leaves no Room for *Epicurus's* fortuitous Concourse of Atoms. Having shew'd, that the Frame of the World cannot have its Existence from Necessity, but must be the Product of a wise Being. I will shew,

II. That the plain Signatures of Wisdom, which appear in those Parts of it, with which we are best acquainted, are Proofs of its being the Effect of some wise, intelligent Being.

1st, The present oblique annual Motion of the Earth, by Means of which every Part of the Earth receives proper Degrees of Heat for the Plants and Animals of that Part, is a plain Indication of Design in it. For, 'tis evident, if the annual Motion of the Earth had been parallel to its diurnal one, we must have wanted the Vicissitude of Summer and Winter: And if it had been less oblique than it is, the Inhabitants near the *Poles* would have received little Benefit from the Summer; and if it had been more oblique to the *Æquator*, the Heat must have been greater in the *torrid Zone*: But if no Declination at all, or any other Degree of it, that should differ *much* from what we have at present, must have been worse for the Plants and Animals, than it is now: Then this exact Contrivance of the Earth's Motion must be the Effect of a wise Cause.

2^{dly},

2dly, Another Instance of Contrivance is, the natural Oeconomy of the World, by which a sufficient Provision is made for that vast Family of Animals, that dwell upon the Face of the Earth; every Kind of which are furnish'd with proper Instincts to find out such Food, and such Accommodations, as are fittest for them. In a Word, the Instances of Wisdom and Contrivance are as many as the Things of the World; if we cannot find out all the Uses, they serve for, we should be so fair as to acknowledge, that such Things may have proper Uses, tho' we know not what they are. This, I think, is reasonable, so long as we cannot deny, that there are many Things, which do as regularly tend to a certain End, as if they had been formed for such an End by the best Understanding. In such Case our not knowing the Uses of some Works of Nature, is no Proof of any Thing, but our Ignorance; and we might as well argue, that there is no Contrivance in the Works of human Art, because the Animals below us, cannot discover our Intention in the Contrivance of them, as that there was no Intention or Design in the Works of Nature, only because we cannot always find what it was.

Having shewn, by the Help of Motion, Intelligence, and the Regularity of the World, that there must be some wise and intelligent Being, different from Matter, that concerns himself in the Government of the *natural* World, I will prove also, that he concerns himself with the Behaviour of *moral* Agents.

The Reasons which some Men bring to support their Opinion, that God does not mind which Way Things go in the moral World, are,

1st, That they cannot see any Difference between moral Good and Evil. Or,

2dly, If there should be a Difference between them,

them, they are sure that God would not concern himself about the Behaviour of *moral Agents*, because they cannot observe him making Distinction by Rewards and Punishments, between the Observance, or not Observance, of what is called moral Good.

1st, That they cannot see any Difference between moral Good and Evil.

But that there is a Difference is evident, and for these Reasons.

1st, Because if we suppose the Existence of such intelligent Beings, as compare one Thing with another, and *understand* as well as *feel* Differences, the different Circumstances of Persons will necessarily make a Difference in the Character of their Actions, with Regard to the Judgment of such intelligent Beings.

2^{dly}, Because those who have consider'd the Nature of human Actions with the most Care, such as Philosophers and Legislators, have built their Rules and Laws upon the Supposition of there being such a Difference in Nature.

3^{dly}, Because those who least of all observe moral Differences in their Practices, but refer all to Pleasure or Profit, cannot but confess a Difference in some Cases.

1st, Because so long as there are such intelligent Beings, as can compare one Thing with another, and *understand* as well as *feel* Differences, the different Circumstances of Persons will necessarily make a Difference in the Characters of their Actions, with Regard to the Judgment of such intelligent Beings.

The Fallacy of the *Hobbist's* Argument lies in this, that they consider Man only as capable of receiving the Ideas of Pleasure and Pain, without considering him as a rational Being, that by comparing one Thing with another, may take Notice of other Differences, which his Reason assures him

him to be as real, as those of Pleasure and Pain. That inferior Animals discover nothing in the Nature of Things, but Pleasure and Pain, they receive from them, may be probable enough, because they have no Power of comparing Ideas with one another, and of forming complex ones, such as are those concerning moral Truths, or of forming general Propositions from any reflex Act of the Mind upon particular Things; but to Men there must appear what we call *moral* as well as natural Differences, antecedent to all positive Laws made concerning them; because the different Circumstances of Things and Persons must necessarily make a Difference in *human* Actions, altho' the natural Action itself be the same. Thus every one must see a Difference between taking away another Man's Life for the Preservation of his own, and the taking it away from a Man that has done no Hurt; nay more, is his Benefactor, tho' the Action be the same. I cannot see what the *Hobbist* can answer to these Arguments, unless it be, that our conceiving such moral Differences in human Actions, will not prove their real Existence in Nature, as the Mind of Man is capable of forming complex Ideas, that have no Existence out of the Mind, and that Moral Differences must be such, because if they had a real Existence, there could be no more Dispute about them, than there is about Pleasure and Pain: But our Answer is, that the Cases are not parallel, because Pleasure and Pain are felt and judged by our Senses, without any Want of Reflection to assure us of their Difference; and, therefore, all Persons, whether wise or unwise, are equally affected by them; but the beauty of Virtue and Deformity of Vice, will require some Degree of Reasoning from us, if we would discover them; and yet this Reasoning of ours does not make these Differences, but finds them what they are in Nature. For no Man sure will allow, that there is no such

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Thing in Nature as Symmetry and Proportion, because some Persons shall admire that which has neither Justness nor Elegance. And why then should it be an Argument against the Difference between Virtue and Vice, that all Persons are not equally sensible of the Beauty of one, and the Ugliness of the other? The internal Characters of Mind, as well as the external Proportions of Body, will continue to be what they are, notwithstanding any wrong Judgments we may make of them; and since there is and must be a wrong as well as a right Taste in judging of the internal Characters of the Mind, as well as of the Proportions of the Body, the vitiated Taste of a *Hobbist* ought to pass for no better Argument against ethical Truth, than the *Gothick* Taste of an illiterate Person be taken as an Evidence against the Truth of any other Science.

2dly, Those who have consider'd human Nature with the most Exactness, such as Philosophers and Legislators, have formed their ethical and political Schemes upon the Supposition of moral Differences in Nature.

1st, Of the Philosophers, all agreed in prescribing Virtue as that which would best of all alleviate the Miseries that human Nature is subject to; and, generally speaking, procure for it all that Happiness, which it was capable of receiving. They all observed, that there were two Principles of human Actions, viz. Reason and Appetite, together with all the Train of Passions accompanying those Appetites. They observ'd, that the last inclin'd us to pursue improper Objects, or proper in an improper Way. That Reason when hearken'd to, would direct what Objects ought to be courted. They taught, that the Happiness of Man, consider'd as a rational Creature, was no otherwise attainable, but by hearkening to Reason; and that there was no Truth, Reason, or good Sense, separate from Virtue. The *Stoics* asserted that the

Happiness of Man consisted in having so reduced his Appetites, so as to be able to live without them; and even *Epicurus* himself own'd, that there could be no such Thing as Pleasure (in which he made the Happiness of human Life to consist) without Virtue. [See *Laertius's* Life of *Epicurus*, Sect. 138.] So far was *Epicurus* from denying moral Differences, which ought to shame our *Atheists*, who would subvert the original Nature of Things, in order to gratify their base Appetites.

2dly, I am to shew, That all Legislators, or Founders of *free States*, have supposed the Obligation to be just and honest, as the Foundation of their several Constitutions, and the best Supports of them.

It cannot be denied, that Legislators were Persons sufficiently qualified for deciding this Question, as they are supposed to have been acquainted with the Springs of human Actions. That they believed there was such a Thing as moral Honesty, and thought that the World believed so too, is evident from hence, that they depended more upon the Consent of the People, than Force for the Preservation of their Establishments: But the Consent of the People could never be a Foundation for a durable Society, unless they supposed the People prepossessed with an Opinion, that this Consent laid them under an Obligation of continuing it; which they could have no Reason to believe, unless they supposed them under an Obligation of keeping their Word, before they had given their Consent. The *Hobbist* supposes them obliged by Virtue of their Compact; but that antecedently to this, there was no Obligation upon any of them to be faithful and just, because there was no such Thing as Faith and Justice in Nature. But supposing the ancient Founders of States to be persuaded, that there was no such Thing as Faith or Justice, before the Laws of Society had made such a Distinction in human Actions,

Actions, they must see that Men would be no more obliged by any Consent given either to continue their Consent, or to make good their Promises, than if they had done nothing at all of either; for it would be impossible, that they should lay themselves under an Obligation, because such an Act would be made in a State of Nature, when there was no Difference between Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness: And, therefore, their Consent being given at a Time, when they were not obliged to keep their Word, they could not be obliged to do it. But as we are sure that the Founders of *free* States thought the People's Promises the best Security of their Establishments, they certainly acknowledged moral Differences obligatory, before positive Constitutions were made.

But it may be said, that some of the ancient Legislators could not believe that there was any Justice independent of positive Constitutions, because they gave Impunity to the Breach of some moral Laws, particularly *Lycurgus* gave a Licence to steal, that the *Spartan* Youth might learn to out-wit their Neighbours.

But in Answer to this, we say, that the making Laws concerning Property, is making Laws concerning a Thing of a changeable and positive Nature; and as No-body doubts, that a Legislator may take away Part of a Man's Property for the Support of the Publick, so *Lycurgus* might subject the Properties of particular Persons to such an Inconvenience as this, without offending against the eternal Rules of Right and Wrong, as he thought it for a publick Good. But,

2dly, Unless *Lycurgus* was persuaded of the Obligation of performing a religious Promise, he never would have persuaded the People to bind themselves by Oath not to alter his Laws, till he return'd, which he never intended. He could not have been so weak, as to believe, they would observe their

356 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
Oaths when he was gone, if he had not known they
universally believed there was such a Thing as Faith
and Honour, antecedent to his Laws.

3dly, Those who least of all observe moral Differences in their Practice, and refer all to Pleasure or Profit, cannot but confess a Difference in some Cases: For if they can have their Pleasure and Profit as well by observing the Rules of Equity, as otherwise, there are few that would not choose them in an honest Way. If at any Time there have been particular Persons that have wantonly injured their Fellow-Creatures, they would have been wont to pass under the Character of Monsters. The Unbeliever ought to assign some Reason of this constant Appearance in Behalf of what we call Virtue: For if the Reason of this *Phænomenon* is to be drawn from hence, either that the Reason of Man discovers, even to the most vicious Persons, a Fitness and Unfitness of Things, abstracted from Pleasure and Profit; or that there is an Inclination in the human Species, which moves it to Acts of Benevolence and good Nature, when not checked by private Interest, it will still be a strong Proof of a Difference in the Nature of Things. For if rational Creatures, in Virtue of their Reason, discover any such Things, they must have as good a Foundation in Nature, as the Reason of rational Agents; or if Inclination leads them to such a Behaviour, so long as this Inclination appears almost to be universal, nothing less than the Nature of Things can be a Cause sufficient of so regular an Effect.

There is one other Difficulty raised against the Proof of moral Differences, which is, that let it be never so certain that some Things appear to us morally good, others evil; yet they may not appear so to God, whose Nature and Perfections are incomprehensible, and till it appears that God judges of them, as we do, we may still be safe, tho' we do not practise agreeably to those Differences: And
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some Men pretend to be confirm'd in this Belief, because they cannot see God making any visible Distinction between good and bad Men.

In Answer to the first Part of the Objection, we say, that how incomprehensible soever the Nature of the supreme Being, and his Manner of Thinking may be to us; yet as we have proved, that the Morality of human Actions is founded upon the Nature of Things, if we could be supposed to mistake, when we judge according to such Evidence, and that Things appear quite different to God, than they did to us, it would be best for us to leave off reasoning upon any Kind of Truth whatsoever. But let there be never so much Difference between the Perfection of God's Knowledge, and that of ours, yet, 'tis plain, our Knowledge, as far as it reaches, is real. As to the second Part of the Objection, that God makes no visible Distinction of good and bad Men, which they think a Proof, that he does not judge of Good and Evil as we do; I will shew,

2dly, That God may have such Apprehensions of Virtue and Vice as we have, and yet not make any greater Distinction between the Good and the Bad, than what we see at present. The Infidel cannot be sure he shall not live in a future State; and, therefore he cannot be sure, that this Life is not a State of Probation for another: For it is not at all inconsistent with the Notions we have of Holiness, that a holy Being should permit Wickedness to thrive for a Time, and Goodness to be the Sufferer, supposing a Time to come, when the Good and Bad shall be visibly distinguish'd by Rewards and Punishments, unless any Man could prove it inconsistent with Goodness to make a Trial of the Behaviour of free Agents: For 'tis certain, an exact Discrimination of the Good and Bad, by Rewards and Punishments, would not be consistent with any State of Probation; which is Reason enough for a good
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Being's not making any such Difference, altho' there be a real Difference between Virtue and Vice, and altho' this Difference appears *such* to the supreme Being as it does to *us*: But that when this State of Trial shall be over, which will be when we die, that then Virtue should meet that Happiness that naturally belongs to it, and Vice, that Evil and Misery which are its proper Portion. These are such necessary Consequences from the different Natures of Good and Evil, and from their being apprehended as such by the supreme Being, that 'tis impossible to be otherwise. And, therefore, God's Forbearance of Sinners, at present, is no reasonable Ground for the *Atheist* to fancy it shall always fare as well with him, as it does now.

Having proved, that the Behaviour of such a moral Agent as Man, could not be indifferent in the Sight of God, it concerns every Man to inform himself what Behaviour will be most agreeable to him. And as he has heard of many Persons who pretend to have received Instructions from Heaven, in order to tell Men what Behaviour God would require at their Hands, to examine whether there be not Truth in the Pretensions of some or other of them.

In Answer to this, the *Infidel* says, he has no Reason to concern himself in any Pretensions to Revelation; because he is persuaded,

1st, That there can be no rational Proof given of any Revelation.

2^{dly}, That if there were any Means of proving, that a Person had received Authority from God to discover some Truths to Mankind, that all such Discoveries would be useless, and therefore cannot come from God, because he does nothing in vain.

3^{dly}, Because there have been so many Pretences to Revelation, that there is no finding out which is the true one, if any were such.

1st,

1st, That there can be no rational Proof made of any Revelation.

In Answer to which, I will shew,

1. That the extraordinary Works related in the *Gospels*, supposing them, for the present, to have been really performed, would be a sufficient Proof of a divine Mission.

2. That the Disciples of our Lord were well qualified for judging whether some of these Works were *really* done; and consequently, their Testimony concerning such miraculous Facts would be as credible a Testimony as it would have been concerning any other Matters of Fact, and then a Revelation may be made credible to Men.

But before I proceed, it may not be amiss to shew the Possibility of such Works being done, and yet of not being the Effects of some Powers of Nature, as *Spinoza* thought. For those who deny the Authority of Miracles do even deny the Possibility of them, when consider'd as perform'd by some Power superior to Nature, and acting freely upon Nature. But the Reason of their denying them is built upon a Supposition, which is a begging the Question in Dispute, *viz.* That God is a necessary Agent, and, therefore, the Laws of Motion must be necessarily what they are; for then it would be true, that all the Effects of those Laws would be equally natural, tho' not equally common, and be as much the Effects of the Powers of Nature, as any of those that are common. But we have already proved, that the Motions of Matter depend upon a free Being, who moved Matter as he thought fit: And tho' he chooses an uniform Manner of acting upon Matter, which we call the Laws of Matter in Motion, yet we may conceive that he may act otherwise, as well as we can conceive that he might have impress'd different Powers upon it from the present ones: And then there can be no Difficulty in conceiving that

God may change them for a *short* Time, as well as for a *long* one, which makes all the Difference between Miracles, and such Works as are the Effects of the settled Course of Nature; it being then not impossible that such Works should have been perform'd, as are related in the *Gospels*, altho' they were not an Effect of any natural Powers of Matter in Motion, I come now to shew,

1. That such extraordinary Works, supposing them to have been perform'd, will be a sufficient Proof of a divine Mission, for these two Reasons.

1st, Because they could not be the natural Effects of any Laws of Nature whatever.

2^{dly}, Because they could not be done by any inferior Agents independently of God. For the only Reasons given, why the Miracles related in the *Gospels* should not prove the Person was sent by God, must be, either because these Works were as much the Effects of natural Causes, as those which are common; or that they might be perform'd by some invisible Agents superior in Power to Man, tho' vastly inferior to God.

1st, There is no Ground to believe our Saviour's Miracles were the natural Effects of any Laws of Nature unknown to Men, because if they were such, no Reason can be given,

1. Why no more of them are produced. And,

2. Because supposing them to be so, How could our Saviour know them? since they are supposed to be unknown to Men.

1st, There is no Ground to believe our Saviour's Miracles were the natural Effects of any Laws of Nature, because no Reason can be given, why no more of them are produced.

That Nature should be many thousand Years in bringing forth the Resurrection of a dead Man, and yet that this should be as natural a Product of hers, as the Birth of a Man, which happens every Day, is what No-body sure can believe. 'Tis not doubt-
ed,

ed, that a real Cause may be defeated sometimes by the contrary Actings of other Causes, but that it should be always so, is not to be reconcil'd with those Marks of Wisdom which appear in those Parts of Nature we are acquainted with.

I do not deny, that many natural Effects have passed upon the World for Prodigies; particularly in illiterate Ages, which are now accounted for by the ordinary Laws of Nature: But then, 'tis to be consider'd, that it has not been for want of observing the Nature of *dead* Bodies, that the Resurrection of such Bodies has passed for a Prodigy, but because Men were assured, by continual Observation, that it was not the Nature of such Bodies to spring out of their Graves; and, therefore, rightly judged it supernatural. But,

2dly, Supposing our Saviour's instantaneous Cures of blind, lame, and sick People, to have been mere Effects of some secret Laws or Powers in Nature, there still remains a great Difficulty in finding out, how our Saviour could know, when these unknown Powers would exert themselves? How he could be possess'd of a Piece of Knowledge which No-body ever had before his Time, the Atheist ought to account for. Till such Time we have a Right to insist upon it, that our Saviour's miraculous Cures should be taken for some uncommon Exercises of the Power of God, and not for any natural Effects of certain Powers of Nature. Nor,

2dly, Could such Works be perform'd by any Agents inferior to God, because the raising a Body to Life requires as great a Power as giving Life at first to it. But whatever extraordinary Works may be done, whether *really*, or in *Appearance* by any invisible Agents inferior to the supreme Being; yet so long as the *Deist* believes him to be the Maker of the World, he cannot believe any inferior Beings to have a natural Power, or a Power independent upon God, of making any new Species of Animals,

mals, or of forming any Individuals out of lifeless Matter, of the same Species of the present ones of God's making; because a Power lodged in any Hands different from those of the Creator, of increasing the Number of Animals in any other Way, than of his Appointment, would be inconsistent with the Oeconomy of the World, and the Fitness of Provisions, both with Regard to the Quantity and Quality of them, for the Use of such Animals. And it cannot be supposed, that God would furnish any of his Creatures with a Power of disturbing his own Plan, and making it unbecoming his Wisdom to execute.

As to the Miracles which the *Egyptian Magicians* perform'd, there is no Evidence that they were more than delusory. For as to the Conversion of their Rods into Serpents, we have no Reason to think this was a real Change into a living Creature; because we find, that *Aaron's Rod*, after it had been twice converted into a Serpent, called afterwards a Rod or Wand: It resumed its primitive Nature, and this too without the Help of any miraculous Change, as far as appears by the History. But however it might have been with *Aaron's Rod*, yet had the *Magicians* Conversion of their Rod been a real Change into a Serpent, it would be hard to give a Reason, why they were not able to form Lice out of the Dust, as well as a Serpent out of the wooden Wand.

And the Scriptures say nothing of Frogs being made by the Incantations of the *Magicians*, but only that they brought them out of the Water upon the Land, which might be done without the Power of forming such Animals as Frogs.

As to *Apollonius of Tyana's* raising a Lady to Life; the Account which *Philostratus* gives of it, shews it to be very doubtful, whether the Lady was really dead, or only in a Trance. [See *Philost. de vita Apollonii Tyan. Lib. IV. Cap. 45.*] And, therefore, this Instance

Instance will never prove, that any inferior Agents have a Power independent of God, of giving Life, or making new Individuals. Consequently, it cannot invalidate my Proof of a divine Mission, drawn from the Exercise of such a Power, as that of giving Life to a dead Body. Having shewn, that some of the Works of our Saviour could not be the Effects of any Powers of Nature, nor of any Agent inferior to God. I am to shew,

2. That the Disciples were qualified for judging, whether such Works were done or not ; particularly with Regard to Christ's Resurrection, that they were able to judge, whether it was *real*, or only in *Appearance*.

It must be observed, from the Account which the *Evangelists* give of this Matter, that they were not credulous ; that they rejected the Story of the Women concerning his being risen ; they might, therefore, be capable of being good Witnesses, when they witnessed against their Prejudices. They *saw* him several Times, knew that he was exactly like that Person, who was crucified : They *heard* him talk with them after he was *dead*, as they had done when he was *alive* : And *Thomas* was convinced, that his Master was truly raised to Life again, by even putting his Fingers into his Wounds. He did not appear once or twice, but several Times, so they had many Opportunities to satisfy themselves, whether it was he or not : And at last they saw him ascend up into Heaven. If after all this Evidence these Witnesses were deceived, we must give up the Testimony of our Senses, as not to be depended upon in any Case whatever. It will not be sufficient to say, that I have allowed the Magicians Rods to be only in Appearance turned into Serpents, and yet no Doubt but the Standers by were as fully persuaded that the Rods were *really* become Serpents, as the Apostles were that they saw their Lord, when they saw his *Apparition* : Because we don't find the
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364 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
Egyptians were difficult in believing the Conversion of the Magicians Rods, and therefore did not examine whether it was really so or not. Whereas the Disciples were averse to believing the Resurrection, and were therefore nice in their Examination; and had several Opportunities of seeing him. Whereas the Conversion of the Magicians Rod was but once made, and quickly destroyed by *Aaron's* Rod, so that there was not much Time allow'd for examining the Truth of that *Appearance*: And there was no Necessity for *Moses* to discover the Change was not *real*; because their Rods being made to disappear by *Aaron's* Rod, was a sufficient Confutation of the Power by which they acted, altho' the Conversion, in both Cases, had been only in Appearance.

If it be said, that had our Saviour really risen with the same Body he laid down in the Grave, the two Disciples who travell'd with him from *Emmaus*, must have known him: Our Answer is, that our Saviour appear'd in a different Dress; and 'tis very possible they might entertain no Suspicion of his being their Master, whom they did not believe to be alive, tho' the Person they conversed with might very much resemble him in his Aspect, and his Voice. And, therefore, nothing can be inferr'd from this Fact, to the Prejudice of a *real* Resurrection.

Having consider'd the first Difficulty of the *Infidel*, viz. that there can be no rational Proof given of any Revelation from Heaven, and proved it to be false, I come now to consider his second Difficulty,

2dly, That if there were any Means of proving that a Person had received Authority from God to discover some Truths to Mankind, that all such Discoveries would be useless, and, therefore, cannot have God for its Author, who does nothing in vain, or without good Reason.

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Which they support by these two Reasons, 1. Because Authority cannot be a sufficient Ground to form a rational Assent upon. 2. Because whatever is needful to be known in religious Matters, may be found out by Reason and Discourse.

I shall therefore shew, *first*, That Authority may be a good Reason for giving our Assent to a Proposition.

2dly, That a Revelation is better fitted on many Accounts for teaching Men their Duty, than Reason or *Philosophy*: And, therefore, 'tis not unbecoming the Wisdom of God to make one.

1st, That Authority may be a good Reason for giving our Assent to a Proposition.

By an Assent formed upon *Faith* or *Authority*, in Distinction from an Assent that rests upon *Reason* only, I mean, an Assent, that a Proposition is true, tho' our Reason cannot discover any necessary Agreement between the Parts of the Proposition; but believes them to be truly connected, because we are told as much, so as if God reveals a Proposition to us, which natural Reason discovers to be necessarily true; as he has done in the moral Law; all such as do evidently perceive it to be true, can't properly be said to take it for a Truth upon Faith, or the Authority of God, but upon the Reason and Evidence of the Thing, because where the Proof is evident, the Reason of Assent will be resolved into its Evidence, not into the Authority of the Person who relates it for a Truth.

God had left Mankind, except the *Jews*, almost without any Directions, than what natural Reason could furnish them with. For excepting a few Traditions, (which they had confounded with Fable and Story) whatever they found out, was in a Way of Reason and *Philosophy*, by such Inferences as Reason was able to draw from its own Principles. God sent no Prophets among them. Not but he raised up great Men in the several

veral Sects of Philosophy to be the Instructors of the People, and perhaps assisted them in their great Discoveries they made concerning himself, and their Duty to him; but then God did all this in a Way of Reason and human Wisdom. Yet notwithstanding all their wise Instructions, and the Discoveries made by them, concerning the Object of Worship, the Bulk of Mankind made so small Improvement under them, as not to know the true God. And therefore God observing the small Proficiency Men made under this Sort of Teachers, was pleased to teach Mankind himself, that they should rely upon his Credit for such Truths as they wanted to be satisfied in; that they should have his Authority instead of tedious Inferences from Reason or uncertain Traditions.

One would have thought, that Men would have received God's Instructions with a due Sense of Gratitude; that his Veracity should have removed all Objections against such a Method. And yet some pretend to assure us, that Assent given to what we don't understand, tho' supported by the greatest Authority, is repugnant to the Nature of a rational Being; and consequently, that the Obedience of Faith, and a Resignation of Understanding, are a perfect Contradiction to the Nature of an human Mind.

That all Assent must be grounded on some Kind of Evidence or other, is very certain; and also, that a Man must have a clear Perception of the Sense of a Proposition, before he can give any Assent to it; otherwise he would assent to he knows not what: But then it does not follow, that a Man can't give his Assent, till he is able to find out those Proofs, which shew the Connection and Agreement between the Parts of the Proposition; for why may not Authority, affirming the Truth of a Proposition, be a sufficient Evidence to warrant our Assent? 'Tis true, Authority, as *such*, does not

not help us to understand the Proposition better than we did before; and yet the Opinion we have of the Skill and Veracity of the Person, who tells us the Proposition is true, may be to us, a probable Evidence of its Truth, and a rational Ground of Persuasion. And therefore a clear Understanding of a Truth, cannot be previously necessary to every Assent of the Mind of Man.

If we also consider the limited Nature of our Faculties, that there are few Things about which we can certainly determine; that there are many important Truths for which we want rational Proofs; that there are many more, which the Generality of Mankind would scarce be capable of understanding, for Want of Skill to use such Proofs as Reason discovers; one might think it no Injury done to any Man's Understanding, if he received these Truths in a more *certain* Way, from the eternal Fountain of Knowledge. But,

2dly, I proceed to shew some of the Advantages of this Way of teaching the World by Faith, above that of Reason.

1st, Upon Account of its Certainty. Whilst Mankind was left to the Direction of natural Reason, we meet with nothing but Uncertainty and Irresolution about Truths of the highest Concern, *viz.* concerning the *Origin* of the World: Whether there were any supreme intelligent Being, that took Notice of the Actions and Behaviour of Men: And whether supposing such a one, he would forgive Men's voluntary Mistakes, upon their being sincerely concern'd for them, and resolving to do so no more for the future: And whether there was a future State, in which God would reward or punish Men for their Behaviour here. Whereas when God himself undertook to teach the World in a Way of Faith, all Wavering, concerning his Nature and Will, quickly vanish'd. The Apostles were well agreed in publishing the
same

same Doctrines, and propos'd them to their Hearers as certain Truths; and their Converts left off all Disputes of this Kind, and adher'd to what the Apostles taught them. The good Effects of this Agreement quickly appear'd in the wonderful Success of Christianity. *Polytheism and Idolatry* gave Way to the Worship of the one true God. And tho' the Preachers of it were illiterate Men, yet when the World came to consider the Strength of that Evidence, which they brought in Proof of the Doctrines they taught, and from thence saw plainly, that Truth was to be found among them, they quickly quitted their old Engagements in Favour of the Religion of their Country, and submitted themselves to their Instructions; which was more than the Philosophers, those great Masters of Reason, and who so well understood the Art of managing Men's Passions, could ever effect. For whatever Repute their Schools might have as fit Places for teaching Men the Rules of human Wisdom; yet it is plain, from the Multitude of their Oracles, that the World did not think their Reasonings, in Matters of Religion, were so much to be depended upon; and that Faith was a much more certain Principle of Truth.

If it be said, it does not appear that there ever has been any better Agreement in *Opinions* among Christians, than there was among Heathens; and therefore if the great Diversity of *Opinions* among them be a good Argument to prove the *Uncertainty* they were in, then as great a Difference among the Christians, ought in all Reason to infer as great an *Uncertainty*. That tho' the Authority of Scripture be granted, yet the World is never the nearer to an Agreement in the Articles of Religion, as is plain by the infinite Number of *Commentaries* upon the same Scriptures, and the constant Appeal of all Sects of Christians to the same holy Writings; and therefore the Way of
Faith

Faith seems not to have any great Advantage above that of Reason on the Score of *Certainty*.

I answer, that as to the Catalogue of Heresies, given us by the Antients, they were not much to be relied on; that many of them were of small Consequence; and the Writers of those Times observe, that People were then very forward in calling every Opinion that differ'd from their own, by the odious Name of Heresy; that if Christians differ about some important Places of Scripture, such as those which concern'd the *Incarnation*, a *Trinity in Unity*, and some other difficult Doctrines; yet Heathens were very much divided concerning the *Maker* and Governor of the World; whether there was any one intelligent *Being*, to whom these Titles did belong; if there was, whether he had made any Provision in some *other* State for such as served him faithfully in *this*. As to any of these Articles, the Disputes among Christians, were exceeding few, if compar'd with those among the Heathens. That these are of all other Truths of the greatest Concern, as without which there could be no sufficient Reason for serving God at all; for he that cometh to God, must first believe *that he is*, and that *he is a Rewarder of them that seek him*. That the Belief of other Doctrines is requir'd, that our Faith in *these* might be better grounded; and therefore such an Agreement among Christians, so much wanted among such as were under the Guidance of *natural Light*, tho' it were to be found only in *these* Truths, yet if we consider the Importance of them to Religion, would sufficiently prove a Revelation to be better qualified for teaching Mankind the Principles and Motives to Duty, than *Reason* and *Philosophy*.

However, supposing that by Deductions made from Principles of Reason, the wiser Part of the World could have arrived at as great *Certainty*, in the aforementioned Articles, as we Christians are

by the Help of Revelation; yet the Way of Faith would be more effectual to instruct the World.

1st, Because its Way of Teaching is more compendious than that of Reason.

2^{dly}, Because 'tis more easy and intelligible.

1st, Because its Method of Teaching is shorter.

The greatest Part of Mankind having almost all their Time laid out in making the necessary Provisions for Life, the best Method to teach them their Duty is the shortest. But any Truth is sooner learnt, when it is proved by an Argument drawn from *Faith*, than the same Truth would be by *Reason*. As for Instance, if I would understand whether I am obliged to be just in my Dealings, *Reason* would discover it to be so, because Man is made for Society, and can't live with tolerable Comfort without it; and the World is so order'd, that unless fair Dealings were observ'd, every Thing would be in Confusion. From thence I would conclude, that God intended Men should practise this Virtue. To understand this Duty or any other, in a Way of Faith, nothing more is necessary than to see what the Scriptures determine in this Matter; and there we may discover at one View our Duty, what Reason cannot make evident to us, till it has put us to the Trouble of ranging our Thoughts, and observing the Relation they have one to another.

2^{dly}, As Faith teaches us the shortest Way, so it does in a more intelligible one. 'Tis easy to observe that the Generality of Men are hardly capable of any other Notices of Things, than what are impressed by the Objects of Sense; they have not Skill enough to compare simple Terms so exactly with one another, as to compound them into Propositions, and then to infer from every Proposition its natural Consequences; nor when they are made for them to see the Connection and Force of the Argument. An Argument that strikes their Senses shall convince more than the most elaborate Reasonings.

And

And therefore our Saviour's Miracles made more Disciples than the abstruse Speculations of the Philosophers ever had done before. For every Man is able to judge whether a blind Man is restor'd to Sight or not; and when he had seen such Things, he would naturally draw this Conclusion, *If this Man were not of God he could do nothing.* Thus far every Man will be able to reason, let his Understanding be never so shallow.

I am now further to prove the Usefulness of a Revelation, by one Method of teaching Men their Duty *peculiar to it*; which is by preaching that Religion in mixed Assemblies to the People.

The Excellency of this Institution will easily appear, if we consider it as inviting all Sorts of People to come and be Hearers; and also the Number of Places, which have been usually set apart for the Performance of this religious Exercise.

If the Schools of the Philosophers had made their *Lectures* as intelligible as our *Sermons*; yet it must be consider'd, that their Discourses, so far as Religion was concern'd in them was merely *ethical*, without concerning themselves to tell the People the Manner of Worship, that would be most agreeable to the supreme Being; they none of them approved of the establish'd Worship, yet had not Courage enough to teach their Scholars any other, only in general Terms, that the best Way of worshipping him, was to imitate him, and that they told them was best done by studying and observing his Laws; which was in other Words, nothing more than persuading them to observe moral Duties on Account of their *Beauty* and *Excellency*, as being a Transcript of the divine Nature; without pressing upon their Disciples the Practice of Morality upon any *religious* Motives, such as the Hopes of God's Favour, and the Fear of his Displeasure; without telling them, they must practise Virtue, because God would Reward them for so doing, and punish

372 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
them if they did otherwise. So that had their *Lectures* been more intelligible than our *Sermons*, yet this *Institution* would have been inferior to our *Preaching*, as one great Branch of Religion, *viz.* a religious Fear of the Deity, were not taught by *them*.

And, as to the heathen Priests, whose peculiar Business it was to teach the People, they made no Discourses to them concerning their Duty to their Neighbour; they taught Men no Rules of Virtue, but spent their Time in performing Sacrifices and certain Ceremonies of Religion, and in instructing People to follow their prescribed Formulary of external Devotion. [*Vide Lactant. Institut. Lib. IV. Cap. 3.*]

Nor could they, with any Decency, pretend to have given the People any Lessons of Morality; because they were obliged, if they would talk consistently with the Principles of their Religion, to give such frightful Ideas of the Divinity, ascribe to it so many gross Imperfections, Weaknesses, and even Vices, as would be abhorred by any Man that had but a moderate Sense of Honesty.

But farther, if we consider the Number of Places, set apart for the Performance of this religious Exercise, we shall still find the Advantages to lye on the Side of a Revelation. The Schools of the Philosophers were very few, and those only in Places of Resort: They were not enough dispersed, as our Churches have been from the Beginning of Christianity, for the general Instruction of Mankind; so that had their Lectures been as plain as our Sermons, the greatest Part of the World could not have resorted to them, by Reason of their Distance; whereas Christian Churches were both in Cities and Villages. [See *Prideaux's Connect.* Part I. Page 309.]

But then, if a Revelation be of such Use to Mankind, it may be asked, why was it not communicated all over the World? The Want of
such

such Universality has been urg'd as a sufficient Reason for rejecting any Revelation, tho' it comes recommended by every other Proof that can be desired.

I have already shewn, that a Revelation was wanting on several Accounts; and, therefore, am only obliged to see, whether a partial Revelation be as good an Argument to prove that such a Religion cannot come from God, as any Miracles would be to prove that it must come from him. That the first cannot be so good an Argument to *invalidate* a Revelation, as the *latter* is to *confirm* it, is evident, because we are sure 'tis inconsistent with the Nature of God to exercise his Power in so extraordinary a Manner as is that of a Miracle, in Behalf of a Falshood, as 'tis impossible that a God of Truth should countenance an Imposture. Whereas, we are so far from seeing any Inconsistence with the Nature of God, altho' a Religion should be communicated to some, and not to others, that such Communications appear to be mere Matters of Favour, which may be granted or refused, without affecting any moral Attribute of God: And then the Argument drawn from the former cannot be depended upon; because there is nothing for it, but the Will and Pleasure of a Being, who was not restrain'd from acting either Way; whereas the latter depends upon his Nature, which is necessarily what it is; and, therefore, the Acts flowing from it as incapable of Change, as the Nature itself from which they flow. But,

2dly, Supposing it was not a Matter of mere Favour; yet, if it was to be communicated at some Time or other to all Nations, and any Reason could be given, why not to all at the *same* Time, then no Argument could be drawn from the partial Preaching of the Christian Religion, which would affect its Divinity. But,

1. Altho' when we consider the Uncertainty Mankind was in with Regard to the Will of God,

God, we might have believed, that God of his Goodness would, some Time or other, make himself better known to us; yet it would be a Favour in him to go out of the common Course of his Providence for any of our Advantages. The Light of Reason he had given us for our Guide, and if that shone but *darkly*, yet if God would be merciful to such as made the best Use of it, neither his Justice or Goodness could be called in Question, tho' he had not made any extraordinary Communications of his Will. We Christians can gratefully own the Advantages we enjoy above Heathens, without presuming to say, that God could consistently, with his Attributes, have remitted our Offences, and will still forgive those, who never had the Gospel preached to them, without the Knowledge of Christ's Atonement. We freely own the Advantages of Faith for a general Instruction of the World, and yet will not say, that God has left himself without Witness in the heathen World; that it was possible for Men to find out the main Strokes of their Duty, and to hope that God would pardon their Sins upon Repentance, is evident from the moral Writers among the Heathens. If others of meaner Capacities could not strike out their Duty in a Way of Reason this plainly shows, that God was not obliged to give all Men equal Abilities for understanding *natural Religion*; and, therefore, it can never be a good Argument against *revealed Religion* should any one argue, that 'tis not from God, because not equally given to all. Since no Reason can be given why God should be at Liberty in distributing *natural Light* in various Degrees, which will not equally hold with Regard to supernatural Light, in the Way of a Revelation. But,

2. Supposing it was not a Matter of Favour in God to make a Revelation of our Duty; yet, if our Revelation should be communicated to all at
some

some Time or other, and some Reasons might be assign'd why it should be communicated to *some*, and not to *others*; then its Want of Universality would not affect its Divinity, for those who lay a Stress upon this Argument, must take these two Things for granted, *viz.* That the Gospel will never be universally propagated; and that no possible Reasons can be assign'd, why *all* Nations have not the Gospel communicated to them at the *same Time*: But if there is no Reason for taking either of these for granted, then the whole Support of this Objection is taken away.

As to the first of these, *St. Paul* tells us, that the Time will come, when the Fulness of the *Gentiles* shall be brought into the Church of Christ, and that then the *Jews* too shall be converted: And, therefore, no *Deist* can with Reason object, that because the Time is not yet come, it will never come. But then, it may be said, that if Revelation is a great Benefit, it cannot be thought, that a good God would have left so many Parts of the Earth in Darkness to this Time. Our Answer is, that tho' we do not pretend to tell the particular Reasons which determin'd God not to send his Apostles into *China*, *Tartary*, or *America*, when they publish'd the Christian Religion in the *Roman Empire*; yet, if we can assign a Reason, why it was not preached to them, it will be enough to destroy the Force of this Objection.

One Reason why the Gospel was not preached every where, at the same Time, might be, that such Nations were not qualified to receive it. They were ignorant of the first Rudiments of Religion, and, therefore, for want of improving their Minds, would have been incapable of relishing a Religion so perfectly rational as our Christian.

As to the *Americans*, we know not when that Country was first peopled; and as to the *Tartars*, as we have none of their Histories to inform us of

them, we are at Liberty to suppose them as unqualified for receiving Christianity as we please.

The only Nation which could pretend to any Degree of Politeness at that Time, and which had not the Gospel preached to them, were the *Chinese*. And yet how much soever the Literature of these People have been cried up, 'tis certain they were poorly skilled in *Metaphysics*, not having any Notion, nor even any Name for the supreme Being. [See *Martini Historia Sinica, Lib. I. China Illustrata Kircheri, pag. 22.*] And, therefore, if any People were disqualified for receiving so excellent an Institution as our Christian, the *Chinese* must be of that Number, being ignorant of that which is pre-supposed to every Revelation, the Being of a God. Whereas the *Greek* Philosophy being spread over all the *Roman* Empire, had formed Men's Minds into a truer Way of Thinking, and from thence insensibly led them into juster Notions of Religion, than were to be met with in those Places where it was not known, and made them ready to embrace a rational Religion, as soon as it was proposed to them, which would be a sufficient Reason why the Gospel should be preached to them, and not to the *Chinese*, and other barbarous Nations. And therefore, for all this terrible Objection, a Revelation might have God for its Author, and be of Use to Mankind, tho' all Nations were not at the same Time favour'd with it.

I come now to consider the third Reason by which the *Deist* defends himself, in not examining into the Merits of any Revelation, *viz.*

Because there are so many Pretences to Revelation, all of them pretending to be supported by the extraordinary Power of God, that there is no discovering, which of them is the true one, if any such were, from Impostures.

In Answer to which, I will shew, that the Christian Revelation is supported with such Evidence as
ought

ought to satisfy every reasonable Enquirer of its being from God.

I have already shew'd, that if such uncommon Works, as are related in our Gospels, had been done by Christ, they would have been a good Proof of his Mission, and that the Religion he taught was from God: We have also seen, that our Lord's Disciples could not be imposed upon in the Account they have left us of those Miracles. The only remaining Difficulty, is to satisfy the Unbeliever, that the Apostles were honest Men.

That the Apostles, as Things *then* were, could lie under no Temptation of forging Miracles, is evident, because they could have no Inducement for making a Profession of the Christian Religion, supposing their Account of our Saviour's Miracles to be a false one. For,

1. The Apostles could not possibly expect to live easy, unless they could reconcile the greatest Part of those, with whom they lived, to a Liking of the Gospel.

2. That there was no Probability that the Gospel would have any Success, at least in their own Time, and who could care to be destroy'd for the Benefit of others, that might succeed them.

1. The Apostles could not expect to live easy, &c.

The World was then divided into *Jews* and *Gentiles*. With Regard to the *Jews*, the Apostles were to expect the worst Usage, as they were obliged to speak in the best Manner of that Person, whom the whole Nation of the *Jews* had treated as a Malefactor. They could not but know also, that the *Jews* were very tenacious of their religious Ceremonies, and, therefore, might easily guess what Sort of Entertainment they were to expect. And tho' the Apostles *at first* allow'd Converts from *Judaism* to retain many of the Ceremonies of their Religion together with Christianity, and were so complaisant to

378 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
to them as to oblige the *Gentile* Converts to abstain from some Things, that were most disagreeable to the *Jews*, yet there was no Reason to think, that these Allowances would satisfy the *Jews*, because they must see, that their Religion must sink, if Christianity prevail'd.

Neither could the Apostles expect any better Quarter from the *Gentiles*.

Reasons of State, as well as those of Religion, would oblige every heathen Government to destroy them, for endeavouring to carry off Men's Minds from the Government Worship. And we find, in Fact, the first Christians were generally hated. [See *Tacit. Annal. Lib. XV.*] And, therefore, 'tis plain, while this Aversion lasted, there could be no Hopes for the Apostles of living tolerably easy with them. But,

2. I am now to consider, whether they had any Probability of converting such a Number of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as would secure them from the Malice of the rest, and reward them for converting them. But the Improbability of such quick Conversions will easily appear, if we consider,

(1.) The Nature of the Religion to which they were to convert them, together with the State of Virtue and Vice, as it was, when they began to preach the Gospel. And,

(2.) The Difficulty of imposing upon the World at *that* Time, when they began to preach the Gospel, by false Miracles, and a suppositious Resurrection.

(1.) Let us consider the Nature of the Religion to which they were to convert them, and how both *Jew* and *Gentile* were disposed at that Time for receiving such a Religion.

Every one knows the Difficulty of persuading Men to quit their religious Principles, how weak soever, if they have been the Religion of their Country for a long Time. But the Difficulty will be

be greater, if that Religion, to which they are to be converted, flatters none of their Vices; and the difficulty encreases, when the Persons to be converted, are wicked Men. The Apostles then could not flatter themselves with the Hopes of many Converts; their Doctrine indulg'd no Man in any irregular Behaviour; the Gospel requires the Practise of every Thing that deserves the Name of Virtue, and forbids every Passion of corrupted Nature, so far, as such Appetite and Passion are Effects of the Corruption of our Natures. It allows no Man to commute for internal Goodness by external Performances; it proposes no Advantage upon any better Terms, than those of parting with every vicious Inclination, and becoming good Persons.

The *Jews*, of that Time, were so attach'd to the Outside of their Religion, that there would be small Hopes of persuading them to receive a Religion that required an unaffected Goodness; and the *Gentiles* were so corrupted, that the Apostles could not expect to make but few Converts among them.

But it may be said, that tho' the Nature of the Religion was forbidding enough to a bad Liver, yet they might hope for Success by the Weight of the Miracles, which they pretended were performed by the Author of it, as they knew Mankind in general are affected with marvellous Relations. I will therefore shew,

(2.) The Difficulties which the Apostles must have met with, had they intended to impose upon the World by *false Miracles*, or a suppositious Resurrection, which will appear by considering,

1. The Circumstances of the Persons that were to carry on the Cheat.

2. The People that were to be cheated.

1. The Persons that were to carry on the Cheat.

They were twelve in Number, which were too many to carry on a Cheat, when any of them might make his Fortune by betraying it, and had Reason to fear a Gibbet for keeping it. And yet had any
one

one discover'd it, the Design had been ruin'd beyond Recovery. The Apostles, therefore must have been weak Men, had they built their Hopes upon such a Foundation. Especially too if we consider, that they all forsook, or denied their Master, when he was seized by the Soldiers, such Persons cannot be supposed fit Instruments for carrying on a Cheat, for certain they never could have trusted one another, after such a notorious Proof of their Unfaithfulness to their Master. For why should they suppose they could stand more courageously by one another, than they had done by their Master? And Nobody could believe, that they would have given so bad an Account of their own Behaviour, had it not been true.

Whereas those who *afterwards* counterfeited Miracles, in the sixth and following Centuries, if they had been discover'd ran no Hazard either of Life or Fortune. The Government was then Christian, and, therefore, whatever was done in Favour of it, would pass for a pious Zeal for the Service of God and Christ. Those who were in the Cheat, would make no Discovery, because it would not be their Interest to betray one another; for if the Miracle succeeded, they might hope to be Gainers by it; and if it was discover'd, People would only say, they had more *Zeal* than *Understanding*: And, therefore, it is a groundless Suspicion which is drawn from those counterfeit Miracles to the Miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles. But,

2. If we consider the People that were to be cheated, the Case of the Apostles, and their Successors, was very different.

1st, As the Persons that were to believe their Account of Miracles, were Enemies to the Christian Religion.

2^{dly}, As they were better able in their Time to distinguish fictitious from real Miracles.

1st, As

1st, As the Persons that were to believe their Account of Miracles, were Enemies to the Christian Religion, and as *such* would not easily give Credit to those Miracles which were to be the chief Support of that Religion. It is natural to believe, that those who hated the Religion, would be no Friends to Miracles, because these would give it a Reputation in the World; and, therefore, the Apostles could have but small Hopes that their Miracles, if *counterfeit*, would pass the Examination of such prejudiced Persons.

2^{dly}, Men were better able in the Apostles Time to distinguish fictitious from real Miracles.

When the Apostles began to preach the Gospel, most parts of Learning were in as great a Degree of Perfection as they had been ever before. The several Powers of *Nature* were carried to a great Height, when compar'd with some succeeding Ages: And, therefore, the World would be better qualified for distinguishing the *natural* from the *marvellous*. The Apostles, considering their Education, could not hope to impose upon such a People; or, if they attempted it, must have been found out. If it be said, that the Apostles made Converts only of the lowest Part of the World; I answer, that supposing it true, it cannot be supposed, that the upper Part of the World would have sat idle, and let them carry away the People off from the establish'd Worship, had they been able to have detected them of any Fraud. If the Apostles had been Men of so much Cunning as the Objection supposes, they would have been discouraged from undertaking a Cheat in so unseasonable a Time. The proper Times for Imposture, are Times of Ignorance, when any Thing unusual may be made to pass for a *true* Miracle: Such are the Times in which Fraud and Ignorance are wont to thrive; and such were the Times, when to the Shame of Christians, *counterfeit* Miracles crept into the Church of God: And

And the Histories of those Times shew that the Pretences to Miracles were multiplied in Proportion as the Ignorance of the People increased. And, therefore, tho' latter Ages might carry on Cheats successfully, it does not follow, that the Apostles could hope to do so.

If it be said, that the Apostles might please themselves with beings Heads of a Party. This is such thin Diet, as would never support a Man against the Difficulties which the Apostles expected, and actually met with. Had the Desire of Glory been their Motive for preaching the Gospel, they must quickly have been discouraged, when they saw themselves treated with greater Contempt than any other Sort of Men, and actually put to Death, merely for preaching it. Those who can believe, that any Persons can be tickled with such Sort of Fame, may believe any Thing. And therefore the *Deist* labours in vain, whilst he endeavours to persuade himself and others, that the Apostles were Deceivers. The only Refuge left him would be this: That the Apostles preached no such Religion at the Time set down in the Writings of the *New Testament*. But 'tis impossible this should be true, because if the first Publication of the Religion had been some Years after that Time which the Scriptures mention, every one must presently have found it to be a Cheat, because the *Jews*, among whom it is said to be preach'd, could have told them, they had never before heard of any such Religion preach'd in their Country; but the *Jews* own the Fact, and *Tacitus* mentions the exact Time set down in the *New Testament*. (See *Annal. Lib. XV.*)

Having shewn that the Apostles were not Deceivers; I come now to shew what Assurance we have, that the Writings of the *New Testament*, or the four Gospels, do contain a true Account of the Christian Religion, such as it was at first preach'd by the Apostles; and that there have been no considerable Alterations made in them.

1. We have good Reason to believe, that the *received Gospels*, were either writ or allowed of by some Apostle.

2. That there is no good Evidence that any of the *Apocryphal Gospels*, were writ by that Apostle or Apostles, whose Name they bear; and how it might come to pass, that they were received by some, as the Writings of an Apostle, and yet be afterwards rejected.

1. I am to shew, that we have good Reason for believing that the *received Gospels* were either writ or allow'd of by some Apostle. In proving this Proposition, I will shew,

1st, That there were Gospels written from the Beginning of Christianity, by the Persons, whose Names we have at the Head of them.

2^{dly}, That those of them which bear not the Name of an Apostle, as *Mark*, and *Luke*, were always supposed to have been seen and allowed of by some Apostle.

3^{dly}, That the Gospels which are come down to our Times were *theirs*, and not any *Apocryphal Gospels*.

1st, That there were Gospels written from the Beginning of Christianity, &c.

This is Matter of Fact; and allow'd both by *orthodox* and *heretical* Christians, who lived nearest the Times of their being first publish'd. *Irenæus*, who lived in the second Century, says, *That St. Matthew put out a Gospel; after him St. Mark, then St. Luke, and last of all St. John.* And *Eusebius* tells us, that the four *Gospels* were among such Books as were on all Hands allowed to be writ by those Persons whose Names they bear. And *Irenæus* tells us, that the earliest Heretics found it necessary, upon Account of the great Esteem the Gospels were in, to have Recourse to them, and to defend their Opinions by the Authority of these Gospels. [See *Iren.* Page 190.]

2^{dly}, I am to shew now, that such of the Gospels,

384 *The pretended Difficulties in natural or*
as bear not the Name of an Apostle, viz. *Mark*,
and *Luke*, were always supposed to have been seen
and allowed of by some Apostle. To begin with
St. Mark, *Irenæus* says, he was a Follower of *St. Peter*.
Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, that he fol-
low'd *St. Peter*, and put into Writing the Gospel
which *St. Peter* preach'd, at the Request of the Faith-
ful, and that this Gospel was approved by *St. Pe-*
ter. [*Vide Euseb. H. Ecc. Lib. II. Cap. 14.*] If *Eu-*
sebius in his V Ith Book quotes the same *Clemens* for
saying, that *Peter* neither proved nor disallow'd of
St. Mark's Gospel; *Valesius*, in his Notes upon the
Place, tells us, that this is easily reconcil'd, be-
cause in the V Ith Book, he speaks only of a publick
Approbation of this Gospel; and in the IId Book,
of what Encouragement *St. Peter* gave to it in
private. As for *S. Luke*, we find by *Origen* and
Eusebius, that it was the general Opinion of Chri-
stians, that *St. Paul* meant his Gospel, when he said
of him, "*Luke the beloved Physician, whose Praise is*
in the Gospel." If this were true, we have the
Approbation of an Apostle given to his Gospel.
So *Eusebius* tells us, that 'twas commonly believed.
(*Eus. Lib. III. Cap. 24. p. 95.*) *St. John* look'd over
the three Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*, and
approved them; which cannot be pretended for
the *Epistles* of *Barnabas* and *Clemens*; who are by
some thought not to have been the Authors of those
Epistles which now bear their Names. And there-
fore the Church might have good Reason for recei-
ving *Mark* and *Luke*, and not *Clemens* and *Barnabas*,
into the Canon.

3dly, We are now to see, whether the Gospels
which are come down to us, are really the Gospels
writ by them, or only *Apocryphal* Writings, with
their Names to them. The Reason of such a Sus-
picion is grounded upon this, that if the *Hebrew*
Gospel of *St. Matthew* could be alter'd to such a
Degree, and so soon after its Publishing, that in the
Time

Time of *Eusebius* it was become doubtful, whether it was his Gospel or not; what Security can we, who live at so great a Distance, have, that our Gospels are not as much alter'd? Our Answer is, That Books, in the Hands of the *Gentile Christians* could not be so easily alter'd, as those that were only in the Hands of the converted *Syrian Jews*, for they only made Use of the *Hebrew Gospel* of *St. Matthew*. Whereas those who read the Gospel in *Greek*, were dispersed over the World; consequently a Multitude of Copies in Places at the greatest Distance. And therefore if any considerable Alterations had been made in *one* Place, they must have been detected in another. Besides the Number of *Greek Copies*, there have been from the Beginning a great Number of Translations into different Languages. If there had been many Alterations in our *Greek Copies*, they must have been discover'd by some or other of the old Versions, as the *Hebrew Copy* of *St. Matthew* was found greatly alter'd by comparing it with the *Greek Version*; whereas the *Greek Copies* agree, for the most Part, with all the Versions that have been made from the *Greek*; and therefore we cannot doubt that the Gospels, which we receive as *canonical*, were the Gospels of *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*. I proceed,

2. To shew, that there is no Evidence, that any of the *Apocryphal Gospels* were writ by that Apostle or Apostles, whose Names they bear. And therefore when they give different Accounts from the received Gospels, they are not to be regarded. For,

1st, They were not taken Notice of till many Years after that Apostle's Time, whose Writing they pretend to be; or,

2^{dly}, That if they were quoted by some early Writers, they were not quoted as the Writings of an Apostle. Thus the Gospel of *Barnabas* was not discover'd till above four hundred Years after

it must have been writ, supposing St. *Barnabas* to be the Author of it. And I believe it will scarce be thought probable, that a Gospel, writ by so celebrated a Person as St. *Barnabas*, could have lain hid for so long a Time, especially when we are told, that Christians were very inquisitive to learn any Particulars relating to the Words and Actions of our Saviour. 'Twas this strong Desire that encouraged Deceivers to put out *fictitious* Accounts of our Saviour's Words and Actions, under the Name of some Apostles; and the same Desire would never have suffer'd a Gospel, writ by a *Companion* of an Apostle, to have lain in Obscurity for so long a Time. But,

2dly, As to those *Apocryphal Gospels*, which were quoted by early Writers, there is no Evidence that they were writ by those Apostles, whose Names they bear; because, when they quote any Passage out of them, they either speak of them as *Gospels* forged by Hereticks; or else of Books whose real Authors were unknown, altho' the Title of an Apostle was prefixed to them. Thus *Origen* tells us in his first *Homily* on St. *Luke's Gospel*, "That the Church has four Gospels, but heretical Christians many more;" among which are reckon'd by him the Gospel according to St. *Thomas*, the Gospel by St. *Matthias*: To these *Eusebius* adds that of St. *Peter* and St. *Andrew*. The Gospel intituled St. *Peter's Gospel*, is also mention'd by *Origen*, but rejected by him, as the Work of some other Author. [See *Tom. xi. Comment. in Matth.*]

Having shewn that the canonical Gospels, received by us, were the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*; nothing more can be necessary for settling a Man's Faith in the Christian Religion, but to shew, that notwithstanding the *Originals* are lost, and the Copies that have been transcribed from them do differ in many Particulars; yet the *Variations* either do not affect any thing necessary to be believ-
ed

ed or practised; or if they do, the true Reading is still preserved in some Copy or other.

'Tis evident, that a great Part of various Readings are mere Trifles. That many of those, which are supposed to have been alter'd by Design, had only a Relation to Misquotations of the *Old Testament*, or to reconciling one Evangelist with another; or to leaving out some Passages which they thought might be, or were perverted and misunderstood; or substituting others, less liable to Exception, in the Room of them; or else the alteration might effect some *necessary* Doctrine of Faith.

An Instance of the first Sort is supposed to be found in *Mat. xiii. 35.* *That it might be fulfill'd by the Prophet, I will open my Mouth in Parables.* Porphyry read it in the Copy he used, *the Prophet Isaiah*, and made it an Objection against the Evangelist. And St. Jerome owns he found in some Copies, *the Prophet Isaiah*; but not in the greatest Part; because no such Quotation was to be found in *Isaiah*.

Another Instance of altering, to reconcile one Evangelist with another, is given in the Time of our Saviour's Crucifixion, which St. Mark says was about the *third* Hour, and St. John about the *sixth*; and yet 'tis observed, that some Copies of St. John had the *third* Hour; as some of St. Mark had the *sixth*; just as the Transcriber was inclined either to bring St. John to St. Mark, or St. Mark to St. John.

Of Omissions, and of substituting one Word for another, the Instances are, *Luke xix. 41.* and *John vii. 8.* The first is Christ's weeping over *Jerusalem*: This was thought a Passion unbecoming our Saviour; and therefore, as Epiphanius says, was left out in most Copies. In *John vii. 8.* 'tis thought, that one Word is substituted in the Place of another.

Our Saviour had told his Disciples he would not go to the Passover, and yet he actually did go. And

therefore that the $\epsilon\kappa$ was changed into $\epsilon\pi\alpha$, to avoid the Force of this Objection.

Our Answer to all this is, that no Body ever denied there have been such weak Christians, as might alter their Copies of the Gospels in such Places, as they found themselves unable to defend against the Objections of the Heathens. But such Alterations could not throw out the true Reading in all the Copies, because all the different Copies were at too great a Distance to be alter'd. And we find it true, that in these which are supposed to be alter'd, the true Reading is preserv'd in some Copy or other; and in more than those that want it.

I will next consider the Instances of design'd Alterations in a point of Faith, as concerning the Divinity of the Son.

'Tis thought, that the Dispute between the *Orthodox* and *Arians* was carried on with so much Warmth, that the *Arians* alter'd their Copies in such Places where Christ was God, as 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. *God manifested in the Flesh.* This, some say, was changed into, *which was manifested in the Flesh*, to avoid the Force of the Word God. 'Tis certain, both Readings were supported by a great Number of Copies; which shews the Industry of one of the Parties to support its Opinions. And the famous *Text*, 1 John v. 7. is supposed to have been put into this Epistle to serve Purposes.

Tho' these Instances are not in the Gospels, but in the Epistles, yet as the Gospels might have been as easily alter'd as any of the Epistles at *that Time*, I think myself obliged to shew, that a Christian has less Reason to fear finding the true Reading in *these* Instances of design'd Alterations than in the former ones; because the Alterations aforementioned were made, when there were fewer Copies of the Gospel than there were of these Epistles in the Time of *Arius*; there were then many Copies of

of the *New Testament*, and it was the Interest of either Side to watch one another; and therefore it was not easy to alter such Passages as related to this Controversy. Consequently, every Christian may have enough to build his Faith upon in the *New Testament*. If sometimes there be a Difficulty in determining which is the true Reading of a Passage, and we know not whether some necessary Doctrine be not treated of, we need not be solicitous, we may find it in other Places, where there is no Difficulty in settling the Text; because the necessary Doctrines of the Christian Religion are so often repeated in the *New Testament*, such as we have it, and so closely woven into the Body of it, that there would be no removing any one of them out of every Place of the *New Testament*, without substituting another Set of Gospels and Epistles. But we have shewn it impossible, that our Gospels should be, as to the main Part of them, any other than those which were writ by *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*; and the same Reason will hold as to the Epistles, which were more universally spread in the Time of *Arius*, than the Gospels, when some of the Alterations before-mention'd were made.

Thus I have shewn, that there is no Ground for suspecting that the Christian Religion was a *cunningly devised Fable*; and that it will appear to all impartial Enquirers to be no less than a Message from Heaven.

And now I hope to have fully shewn the dangerous State of Infidelity; or that all the Difficulties the Unbeliever pretends to raise against religious Principles, cannot secure him against the Apprehensions of Punishment in a future State.

Dr. *BURNET*'s
DEMONSTRATION

OF
True RELIGION.

IN order to demonstrate true Religion, it will be necessary, in the first Place, to explain what is meant by *Religion*.

Religion is a Chain of Principles, which being received as true, are the Reasons obliging us to the Performance or Non-performance of such and such Actions.

And, therefore, in treating upon true Religion, it would be proper to demonstrate the Truth of those several Principles, with the Obligations that result from them.

But as they all depend upon the Being of a God, it will be necessary first to prove his Being, and then to shew what religious Obligation arises from it. And here,

I. I will demonstrate, that there is a God; or in other Words, that there must be some self-existent Being.

II. That this Being must be absolutely perfect.

III. That this Being was the Creator of the World. And,

IV. That he is the Governor of it.

I. That

I. That there is some self-existent Being.

By a self-existent Being, I mean, a Being that exists by his Nature, or because it is his Nature to exist.

That there is such a Being, I thus prove.

Because without such a Being, not any Thing could have been.

For if there was not some Being without Beginning; there was a Time when there was no Being; and if so, it must have been impossible for any Thing ever to have come into Being. From hence it will follow, that there cannot but be some independent, eternal, necessary, everlasting, immutable, omnipresent Being.

For whatever exists without a Cause, is independent; and to exist without Beginning, is to exist eternally; and to exist naturally, is to exist necessarily, or because it is impossible not to exist. For that a Thing be possible, it must be the Object of some Power, and therefore if we can conceive it possible for a Being, that exists of his own Nature, not to exist; we must conceive some Power that can make it not exist; and if there be any such Power conceivable, it must be either something in its own Nature, or something without: But 'tis a Contradiction in Terms, that a Being, whose very Nature is to be, should have a Nature not to be; and 'tis no less a Contradiction to suppose an independent Being, subject to any other Power.

A self-existent therefore is a necessary Being, and must consequently exist everlastingly and immutably.

For whatever cannot but be, must be eternal; so whatever a necessary Being is, he must be always so.

And whatever is all this, must be omnipresent.

For whatsoever is self-existent by his Nature, it is equally in its Nature to be in one Place as another; and as its Nature is the Reason of its Being, there is, by Consequence, the same Reason for its being every

where. And as a self-existent necessary Being cannot but be, so it cannot but be whatever it is its Nature to be, and therefore it must be in all Places. And if it might be absent from one Place, it might by the same Reason be absent from another, and by Consequence would not be necessarily in any Place.

A self-existent Being therefore must be omnipresent.

II. This self-existent Being is absolutely perfect.

This is plain; for as we have shewn, a self-existent Being exists by his Nature, necessarily, independently, and immutably, without any Possibility of Limitation or Addition, and therefore must be all that is possible for it to be.

So we have likewise shewn, that nothing could have come into Being, without allowing something self-existent; and if this be true,

As it will hence follow on the one Hand, that nothing does exist but what is self-existent, or had its Being originally from something self-existent, and by Consequence, whatever Perfection any Being has, a self-existent Being must have, because their whole Being is derived from him;

So it will likewise follow, that what a self-existent Being has not, cannot come into Being; and therefore is impossible to be.

And from hence it appears, that a self-existent Being must have all possible Degrees of Being.

And thus, a Being perfect, immutable, eternal, necessary, omnipresent, I call an infinite Being.

From hence I infer,

I. Since there is a self-existent Being, as it will hence follow, that whatever he is, he is by his Nature; and by Consequence, whatever we conceive to be in God, is his very Essence, and really God:

So on the other Hand, since his Nature is independent, eternal, necessary, everlasting, immutable and omnipresent, it will likewise follow, that whatever he is, he is every where, independently,

ly, eternally, necessarily, everlastingly, and immutably.

2. Since whatever is self-existent, is absolutely perfect; then, since every Thing we conceive God to be, is his very Essence, and therefore self-existent, it will follow, that every Perfection, we conceive to be in God, must be absolutely perfect, because self-existent. And by Consequence, when we speak of God's Perfections, we must not be supposed to mean, that these Perfections are distinct from the divine Essence; because there is nothing in God, but what is his Essence; or that they are distinct from each other. For then there must be as many Gods as Perfections; and if so, it will follow,

3. That the Nature of God is simple and indivisible.

4. Since whatsoever is self-existent, is absolutely perfect; and whatever is in God, is God: From hence it will follow, that there can be but one God.

III. This one self-existent Being was the Creator of the World.

Having proved, that nothing could come into Being without something self-existent; either the World was self-existent, or it had its Being from some other that is self-existent.

All that is in the World is either Matter or Spirit; neither of which I will prove to be self-existent.

1. The Matter; which cannot be self-existent.

For since we have shewn, that whatsoever is self-existent is immutable.

Since we have likewise shewn, that whatsoever is self-existent, is simple and indivisible.

And since we have farther shewn, that whatever is self-existent, is omnipresent and perfect; these Arguments demonstrate, that Matter cannot be self-existent, which is evidently mutable, divisible, finite, and imperfect. And if so,

5. From hence we must infer, that whatsoever is self-existent is immaterial. And this brings me,

2. To

394 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

2. To enquire, whether there be any Thing immaterial in the World, without supposing a God, that can be self-existent.

Human Souls are the only immaterial Beings; but they cannot be self-existent. For if every Man has a distinct Soul; and if every Man's Soul be existent; then since it does already appear, that whatever is self-existent is absolutely perfect; it will follow,

1. That there are as many self-existent Beings, as there are human Souls; whereas we have shewn there can be but one.

2. That every Soul is perfect, which is contrary to Experience, and therefore not self-existent. And if so, it will follow, that the World was made by some other Cause, which is self-existent; which was to be demonstrated.

IV. This self-existent Being is the Governor of the World.

To prove this we may observe, what we have already shewn, that whatever is self-existent is omnipresent, and we shall hereafter shew, that whatever is absolutely perfect, must be absolutely powerful, wise, and good; and if so,

Then since it does appear, that whatsoever is in God, is God; and by Consequence, whatever he is, he is every where; it will follow,

That as God is omnipresent, so he must be present in the Perfection of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness; and by Consequence must govern all Things.

For by Power, I mean an Ability to act; and by Goodness, an Inclination to do Good; and by Wisdom, a Faculty of Understanding; that has Relation to Means and Ends. And the Perfection of every powerful, wise, and good Being, is to be exercis'd in doing all that Good, that Wisdom directs to be done.

And

And as it is evident, that that is the most perfect Wisdom, that proposes the best Ends, and prosecutes them by the best Means, and in the best Manner.

So since God is necessarily in every Place in the Perfection of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, he must necessarily be every where doing such Acts of Goodness, as his absolute Wisdom judges best. And in this the whole Notion of Government is absolved, in whatsoever Sense we understand it, in Respect as well of the Conservation as the Disposal of all Things.

From all which it appears, that there is a self-existent, absolutely perfect Being, that made and governs the World.

But as we have no Notion of the Perfection of this Being, but under particular and distinct Ideas; this will not be a sufficient Foundation for true Religion, unless we can be assured those Ideas are right.

1. I will therefore enquire what those Ideas are under which God is to be conceived; and

2. Enquire what Notions we are to form of the Creation and Government of the World, considering it as made and govern'd by a Being, to whom those Ideas belong.

Of the Perfections or Attributes of God.

As to the Ideas, under which the divine Nature is to be conceived, as God is an absolutely perfect Being, we are to recollect, that by absolute Perfection is to be meant all Degrees of Being.

And, therefore, the most natural Way to discover the particular Ideas of the divine Nature, is, to enquire what Degrees of Being are possible, and to attribute them to God in the highest Degree.

Now there are four Degrees of Being. Some Beings are mere Substance; some have Life, some have Life and Sense, and some have Life, Sense, and Reason. If God has all possible Degrees of Being,

we

we must conceive him under the Notion of a Substance, indued with the highest Degrees of Life, Sense, and Reason.

The Perfections of God consider'd as a Substance.

By a Substance, I mean a Being in Opposition to a Mode or Manner of Being.

Now as to the Perfections of Substance, all Mankind conceive it a higher Degree of Being to be without Beginning, than to be made; to be independent, than dependent; to be eternal, than momentary; to be infinite, than finite; to be immaterial, than corporeal. And, therefore, when we conceive God to be an absolutely perfect Substance, we must conceive him to be an eternal, independent, necessary, immutable, spiritual, omnipresent, everlasting Being.

The Perfections of God consider'd as a living Substance.

By Life is meant a Principle of Activity.

Now Men conceive it a more excellent Degree of Activity to be able to do all Things, than only some, to do in an Instant without Difficulty and Opposition, than otherwise; to have this active Capacity all at once; to have it last for ever, than for a Time.

And, therefore, while we conceive God as absolutely perfect in Life, we ascribe to him the utmost Degrees possible of Power.

The Perfections of God, consider'd as a Being indued with the highest Perfection of Sense.

By Sense, I mean, here, a Sensation or Perception of Pleasure and Pain.

And as a Life of Pleasure is more excellent than Pain, and as it is more eligible to be sensible of Pleasure, than only capable of it; and as it is better to have been always in Pleasure, than otherwise; so in ascribing to God the Perfection of Sense, we must conceive him to be indued with the most exquisite and actual Perception of all possible Degrees of Pleasure,

sure, without Pain: And this we call the Happiness of God.

*The Perfections of God, consider'd as a Being indu-
ed with the highest Degrees of Reason.*

By Reason we usually mean a Principle of Thought, which, as it exerts itself differently, is conceived under the different Names of Understanding and Will.

By the Understanding, is meant the Operation of the Mind, by which we not only simply apprehend Objects, but also can compare and judge of their several Relations; and from hence draw Inferences and Observations, and provide for the Consequences of them.

But that Part of it more particularly, which relates to the apprehending and judging of the Natures and Reasons of Things, we call Knowledge.

And that by which we propound Designs, and find out proper Means for the Attainment of them, we call speculative Wisdom.

So that if we are to conceive of God as absolutely perfect in Reason, we must conceive him to have all possible Degrees of Knowledge and Wisdom, without any Degree of Imperfection.

And, therefore, whereas 'tis an Imperfection of Knowledge to know but in Part, or by Degrees, by Time and Observation: To be liable to Error, or Forgetfulness:

And as it is a Defect of Wisdom to propose no End, or to aim at a foolish End, or to prosecute a right End improperly:

So if we would rightly conceive of God, we must separate all these Imperfections from him.

The Perfections of the Will.

That which we call the Will, is that by which we determine our Operations in the Way of Choice.

But then as it is supposed to be a Faculty of Reason, so it is by Consequence to be supposed, that it must naturally choose and determine upon Reason.

And

And tho' 'tis certain, that Men do not always follow the best Reason; yet the Will is never determined without some Reason or other.

And as the Reasons that incline the Will may be various, we must therefore conceive it to be such a Faculty, by which we can choose variously, according to the various Reasons offered to us; and therefore it is said to be free.

And, if this be true, that the Nature of the Will, and of that Freedom we ascribe to Man, in respect of it, consists in chusing upon Reason; it will follow, that the more we chuse upon Reason, as our Choice is the more rational and perfect, so it is likewise the more free. And, by Consequence, when our Wills always chuse the most reasonable Things, and our Actions are conformable to them, then we are in a true State of rational and perfect Freedom.

This is the highest Perfection of Freedom, consider'd in itself; and tho' this be an eligible State of Being, yet it would be more so, to be sure of its Continuance.

And, therefore, if we would conceive of God rightly, in ascribing to him the Perfections of Reason, we must conceive him to be endued with an absolute Freedom of Self-determination upon Principles of Reason, and can act variously, as he has Reason for it.

And this we call the Freedom of God. But then,

2. As he has a Power of determining his Operations, according as his Reason directs, so we must conceive he has this in the highest Degree possible, and therefore cannot determine contrary to that Measure of Reason he has for his Operations. And by Consequence must incline to the most reasonable Things, and that without any Possibility of the Discontinuance of this, or of its Alteration or Decay, or any other Defect or Imperfection.

This

This is the Perfection of rational Freedom; and this Perfection of Freedom we call Holiness.

But yet here it is to be observed, that as Reason has different Names, according to its different Objects, and that which is in general called Understanding, is, at other Times, called Wisdom, when consider'd as having Relation to Ends and Means; so it is here.

And, therefore, tho' this perfect Conformity of the Will, to the Dictates of Reason, be in general called Holiness; yet when Reason is consider'd, as directing any Thing, as a Means to an End, and the Will is determined to pursue that End, by those Means; then the Conformity of the Will, in this Case, may be called the Wisdom of the Will.

And as that Wisdom which considers only the Natures and Relations of Things, without any Determination towards them, is therefore called speculative Wisdom; so this Wisdom, which is here said to be an Act of the Will, may be called practical Wisdom.

And as this Determination of the Will in God is invariable, so this is sometimes called, when spoken of the divine Nature, the Immutability of God.

But nevertheless, when we consider the Will only as acting in Conformity to the Dictates of Reason, it is then properly called Holiness.

And as the Will of God is always invariably determin'd by Reason, and the Reason of God is always right, so this invariable Determination of the divine Will, according to the Dictates of his Reason, is what we mean by the Holiness of God.

Corollaries from the Holiness of God.

From this Notion of the Holiness of God, several Things will follow.

I. He cannot act or will any Thing contrary to his Knowledge.

By Knowledge is meant the Perception of Things, as they are; and, by Consequence, Knowledge supposes

poses the Existence of the Thing known, so far as it is known.

And, therefore, as that which has no Being cannot be perceived, or known; so it is certain, that those Things which have a Being, cannot be perceived, or known, what they really are not; because this is to perceive and know what is not, which is nothing.

And, therefore, as God knows all Things, he must know them only as they really are.

And if so, then, if his Will and Operations be always conformable to his Knowledge, they must be always conformable to the Reality of Things, as they are.

And if so, since the Reality of Things, as they are in their Natures and Relations, is the very Notion of Truth; it will follow, that he cannot will, or act any Thing contrary to Truth; so that if God be holy, he must be immutably true.

2. God cannot will or act any Thing contrary to his Wisdom. Wisdom supposes an End; and an End implies some Good. And, therefore, if God cannot will or act any Thing, but what is agreeable to his Wisdom, he must always will, and act with an Intention of some Good; and as an absolutely perfect Being can want no Good to himself; it must follow, therefore, that it must be some Good to his Creatures.

So that from the Holiness of God, we are assured of his Goodness, that he never wills, or acts any Thing, but for the Good of his Creatures.

But then, as Wisdom supposes an End, so does it a wise End. And, therefore, tho' God be immutably disposed to do Good to his Creatures, yet as his Goodness is a wise Goodness, he cannot be supposed to will, or do Good to his Creatures, but in such a Way as shall best answer the End of doing Good.

So

So that when we speak of the Goodness of God, we must mean an immutable Disposition in him to do Good to his Creatures, according to their Natures and Capacities, which, as they are different, so this Attribute is distinguish'd by different Names.

When it relates to Punishment, we call it Justice; to Pardon, Mercy; to Moderation in Punishment, Equity; to Slowness, Patience. But all these are but so many several Ways of doing Good.

And as Goodness is the necessary Result of Holiness, and these several Operations the natural Result of Goodness; so we must as necessarily conceive the divine Nature to be disposed to Justice, Mercy, &c. as we conceive him to be holy and good.

But then, as Holiness always acts according to Reason, and Goodness disposes God to do Good in such a Manner to his Creatures, as they are capable; so tho' God be disposed to punish or pardon, yet it must be only in such Manner, Measure and Season, as his Wisdom sees best for his Creatures.

And if so, we see the Absurdity of those Notions, that are drawn from the absolute Sovereignty of God, denoting a Power of dealing with his Creatures as he pleases.

For according to these Reasonings, we see there is no such Attribute belonging to the divine Nature.

Sovereignty properly signifies no more than a Right of Dominion; which, as God is holy, can only be a Right of dealing with his Creatures according to his infallible Reason; that is, according to his Knowledge of the Natures and Capacities of his Creatures, and as his Wisdom judges best for them.

Thus we are to conceive of the Perfections of the divine Will.

And from hence we may explain the true Ex-

tent of God's Power; for as whatever he does, he does by his Will, and can, therefore, do what he will: So, on the other Hand, we may say, that what he cannot will, he cannot do, because it is contrary to his Reason to will it. And, therefore,

1. As God cannot will any Thing contrary to his Knowledge; so he cannot make Good, Evil, nor Evil, Good: In a Word, he cannot make a Thing to be, and not to be, which is a Contradiction.

2. As he cannot will any Thing contrary to Truth, so it is impossible for God to do or say any Thing that is false.

3. As he cannot will any Thing contrary to Wisdom, and therefore to Goodness; so 'tis impossible for God to make any Creature, that it should be miserable, merely for the Sake of Misery.

Thus much might suffice upon the Perfections of the rational Will, and how far they belong to God:

But because the various Operations are called Passions, I will enquire a little into the Nature of these Passions, and how far they ought to be ascribed to God.

Of the Passions.

Tho' these Operations, which we call Passions, are the Motions of the rational Will, yet they chiefly shew themselves in the sensitive Part.

And they are called Passions, either because they are Effects excited in the Mind by the Operation of the Blood and Spirits; or because there is usually a Commotion excited in the Blood and Spirits by these inward Operations of the Mind.

Now because these Passions are very often occasion'd by, or attended with these bodily Commotions, Men are cautious how they ascribe them to God, as seeming to imply some Imperfections.

Whereas, as they are real Motions of the rational Soul, there must be something in the Nature of God consider'd as a perfectly rational Being, analogous to these Affections in us, tho' infinitely

finitely removed from those Imperfections, with which they are attended in us: And we may as well deny that God knows, because we know by Ratiocination, as deny all rational Affections to him, because they are excited in us by Passion: They are but so many various Ways of representing the Operations of the Will, in the Pursuit of Good, and avoiding Evil; for according as any Object appears to the Understanding to be Good or Evil; so the Will is inclined or averse to it. And this Inclination of the Will to God, we call Love; and the Aversion to Evil, Hatred.

If the Good or Evil be consider'd as present, because the Will cannot but embrace what the Understanding approves, without some Complacency in it, nor shew its Aversion to a present Evil, without some Disturbance at it; therefore, that general Inclination of the Will to Good, which is called Love, is then called Delight and Joy; and that general Aversion to Evil, which is called Hatred, is then distinguish'd by Grief or Anger.

If the Good or Evil be consider'd as future, then the Love is called Desire and Hope; and the Hatred, Fear and the like.

But then, as there is nothing future to God, so Hope, Desire, or Fear, that arise from the Good or Evil, consider'd as future, cannot be ascribed to him any otherwise than in Condescension to our Weakness.

But as for Grief or Anger, Desire or Joy, that relate to a present Good or Evil; there is something analogous in God to these, tho' without our Imperfections.

And, therefore, as we love what appears good to us with a sensitive Complacency, so God has such a Disposition for Good, as to take a rational Pleasure in it.

And tho' God cannot be said to be angry or
C c 2 grieve,

404 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

grieve, as they imply a Disturbance in us, yet there is such an Aversion to all Evil in God, as to produce in him such Effects as are the Tokens of those Passions in us.

Thus far we may ascribe those Affections to God.

But then these Affections are but the various Motions of the Will; and, by Consequence, as it is the Perfection of the divine Will, to be immutably conformable to the Dictates of Reason; so must these Affections in God be always conceived to be: And, therefore,

1. As God cannot will, so he cannot love without Reason; and, therefore, as he cannot be said to love himself, merely because he will, but because he has Reason for it, as being perfect; so he must love himself infinitely, because he is infinitely perfect; and every Thing else in such Degree, as it comes nearer to his Perfection.

And thus he hates, not because he will, but because the Thing he hates is evil, and he hates it in such Degree as it is so.

2. As his Will, so we must conceive his Love and Hatred to be immutably conformable to his Knowledge and Wisdom, and, by Consequence, to Truth and Goodness, so far as to love and hate every Thing, so far as it is agreeable or disagreeable to Truth.

And thus we are to conceive of God, with respect to the Affections or Passions.

And if all these Conclusions be true, from hence I draw this general Corollary, *viz.*

Corollary. That whatever Notions of God are contrary to these, so far they are contrary to Truth.

And if so, from hence it will follow, that since we have a Book, we call the Scriptures, wherein God is represented, of all Perfections, agreeable to these Notions here demonstrated; so far it is worthy to be received as true.

Thus I have dispatch'd the first Thing to be consider'd,

sider'd, *viz.* how we are to conceive of God, as an absolutely perfect Nature or Being.

And whereas I have shewn, that this Being, to whom these Perfections belong, is the Creator and Governor of the World, I will enquire,

II. What Notions we are to form of the Creation and Government of the World, considering it as made and governed by this absolutely perfect Being.

Of the Creation of the World.

By the World is meant all Things visible and invisible, except God.

And by the Creation of the World is meant, that all Things are from God.

Now since God must do every Thing suitably to his own infinite Perfections; if we do but reflect upon these Perfections, and consider him as acting according to them in the Creation of the World, this will bring us to the Discovery and Establishment of true Religion. And, therefore,

I. As the World was made by the Power of God; and if we look back, and consider what the Notion of this Power is, it will furnish us with several Observations.

By the Power of God is meant, his being able to do all Things by his bare Will, and that as he can do, whatever he can will; so what he cannot will, he cannot do.

And if so, then, as nothing could come into Being, without his Will, so all Things must have been produced, so soon as he willed they should be. And, therefore, as the World was by the Will of God, so it required nothing but his bare Will to rise into Being.

When the World was made, is only knowable by Tradition or Revelation.

We can only say, that the Novelty of History, the Rise of Arts and Sciences, the late Cultivation and Civilizing of Nations, and the small Increase

of Mankind, are certain Proofs, that it hath not been of long Continuance : But how lately soever it might have been made, there is no Point of Time, beyond which it might not have been made, if God pleased. And as all Things are equally easy to God, that he can will ; so he could as easily have made ten thousand Worlds, as one. And as there can be no certain Bounds assign'd, beyond which his Works might not have extended ; so 'tis very reasonable to think, that God has made more Worlds than ours ; and as here, so has filled them with Creatures suitable to those Systems.

And thus we may reason from the Power of God.

But when we say the World was made by the bare Power and Will of God, we must not conceive, that it was the Effect of mere Will without Reason. No, as God is absolutely holy, we must conclude he was guided by Reason in the Creation of the World.

And, therefore, that he made the World no sooner, was not without Reason ; and that he made it as it is, was because he saw it most reasonable to be made so.

Reason is the Rule of all his Operations ; and if we consider God, as acting always according to this Rule, which is the Notion we have before given of his Holiness ; since we have before shewn, that under this is comprehended, and by this it is implied, that he must always be directed in all his Operations by his Knowledge, Wisdom, Truth and Goodness ; as we must conceive him acting in the Creation, according to these several Perfections, as his Rules ; so these several Perfections are the natural Rules to us to form our Notion of his Creation by.

And, therefore, first, let us consider God as acting in the Creation, according to his Knowledge ; and if this be allow'd, that his Know-
ledge

ledge is infinite, from hence it will follow, that he made nothing by Chance, but that every Thing was made according to those eternal and perfect Ideas of his infinite Mind.

And if so, from hence we may conclude, that every Thing must have been made perfect in its Kind.

This must be true of all the Creatures in the World; and if we apply this to Man, we must conceive, that he was made a perfect Man, not wanting in any Thing that the Perfection of his Nature and Species requir'd.

And, by Consequence, since the human Nature is compounded of a reasonable and sensitive Principle, which we call Soul and Body, he must have been made perfect in both these.

1. As Man is indued with a reasonable Principle, or Soul, he must be made perfectly reasonable; that is, his Understanding must have been informed, or at least capable of knowing by Reason every Thing necessary to be known, so far as Reason can discover it, and as soon as his Occasions required it: And his Will and Affections must have been in a regular Subordination to his Understanding, so as not to choose, or reject any Thing, but as Reason should direct and approve; this being the Perfection of the rational Nature, which we call Holiness.

2. As the Body is made up of several Parts in a certain Number, Order, and Proportion, with several Powers adapted to several Ends, all which are put in Conjunction with, and under the Direction and Government of Reason; so it must have been made perfect in these Respects: And, therefore, the Body of the first Man must have been made perfect, not only in its integrant Parts, as to their Number, Order, and Use, which I call the natural Perfection of the Body: But it must have also been perfectly subject to the Soul, which I call the moral Perfection of the Body.

This must be so, if the divine Operations are

agreeable to his Knowledge; for otherwise he must have had an imperfect Idea of his Works.

But further, if God made all Things according to his Knowledge, since he cannot begin to know any Thing, he made every Thing with a certain Foreknowledge, how it would act, and what the Event of its Actions would be.

And as 'tis evident, that he made all material Things mutable, and all living Things mortal, and all rational Creatures fallible, and all free Creatures liable to Sin; so he must have foreseen all the Changes of the former, and all the Deaths, Errors, and Sins of the latter, with the Cause, Manner, and Circumstances of them, and all the possible Effects that those Changes, Deaths, and Errors would produce for ever: And if all Things were made according to this Idea, he must have order'd all Things so, as to answer all the several Events for ever, that his Work should not be disorder'd, nor his Design defeated by them.

2. As the World was made according to the Knowledge, so must it likewise be according to the Wisdom of God.

And, therefore, as Wisdom has Relation to Ends and Means, and he is only truly wise, that proposes the best Ends, and purposes them by the properest Means; so in making the World, we must conclude, that God made every Thing for some End, and that he indued all his Creatures with such Natures, as were best suited to, and most proper to attain that End.

And if so, when we see God has made various Species of Creatures in the World; if that was done according to our Notion of Wisdom, he must not only have suited their Natures, Organs, and Dispositions to this Earth, but also have made the Earth so, as was best for their Reception; so as there should not be more Creatures than it should be capable of receiving, nor any natural Necessity, but what it should be capable of supplying.

And

And as 'tis evident, that God intended that these Creatures should come upon the Earth by Degrees, he must not only have given them such natural Dispositions and Powers, as were adapted to that End, but likewise such as were necessary for the Preservation of their Offspring. And as these various Species of Creatures were to be dispersed into different Parts of the Earth, so he must have suited the several Natures of his Creatures to their different Situations, and furnish'd all such Necessaries, as those different Climates should require.

And if among these we consider Mankind as sociable Creatures, so they must likewise be formed with proper Organs of Speech, by which they might communicate their Thoughts to each other, and with such Distinction of Faces, by which they might know one another.

And, *lastly*, as this Earth, and the various Inhabitants of it, have so manifest a Dependence on the heavenly Bodies; so we must conceive, that the Nature he has given, and the Position, Order, and Motion, that he has placed those heavenly Bodies in, is best for the Earth, and its several Inhabitants.

And by Consequence, as the Heat, and Light of the heavenly Bodies, is communicated differently, to the different Parts of the Earth, we must conclude, that this is best for those Places, to have no more Light and Heat than is now imparted to them. We come now,

3. To consider what Notions we are to form of the Creation of the World, as it was made by a God of Truth.

By Truth is meant the Reality of Things as they are, either in themselves, or as they stand related to one another.

And if all Things must have been made according to Truth, since there is a natural Relation between the Idea of all Things in the divine Mind, and the Things to be formed by it, we must

must conceive, that all Things were made accordingly ; and by Consequence, as God could not have an imperfect Idea of his Works ; so all Things must be made perfect in their Kinds, as I said before.

And so likewise, since there is a manifest Relation between the Things themselves, we must conceive, that nothing was made of this Nature, but what was agreeable to these Relations.

And therefore, 1. As whatsoever natural End God made any Thing for, he must have provided Means for attaining it ; and there must have been a necessary Agreement, between those Means, and that End, that the End should be attain'd by those Means.

And as every Thing had its Nature in order to an End, and therefore by acting according to its Nature must attain its End ; so it will follow, that so far as we know the Natures of Things, so far we may be able to judge of their Ends : And on the contrary, so far as we can find the End of any Thing, so far we may certainly conclude, as to its Nature, if we are able to discover what Nature is necessary to that End. As there must be this Agreement between natural Means and their Ends ; so,

2. There must likewise be between natural Causes and Effects :

And, therefore, as no Effect can be produced without a Cause, nor Cause without an Effect ; so whatever natural Effects there are, they must have a Cause proportion'd to them ; and those Effects must be such, as are suitable to the Nature and Power of their Causes.

And as nothing can give what it has not in its Nature to give ; and therefore no Cause can produce any natural Effect contrary to, or above its Nature ; so no natural Effect can receive what the Cause has not.

And

And therefore Rest cannot naturally produce Motion; nor Motion Rest; and Matter can produce nothing but Matter; and Motion nothing but Motion.

And so by the same Reason, a Substance without Life, Sense or Reason, cannot produce a living, sensible, or rational Creature

And if this be true, no living, sensible, much less rational Agent, can be produced by mere Matter and Motion; for as Matter cannot move itself, so it cannot give a Principle of Self-motion or Life to another.

And as neither Matter nor Motion separately or conjunctly, do in their own Nature imply, or are indued with Sense or Reason; so neither can they produce Sense or Reason.

And if so, then every rational, sensible, and living Creature, must be endued with some immaterial Principle, which is the Cause of their rational, &c. Operations.

If any one should ask, what the Nature of that immaterial Principle is, and what becomes of it, when it dies? We answer, we cannot tell.

But thus much we may say, that it is not inconsistent with Reason, that there may be several Degrees and Orders of immaterial Beings, and that such of these, as are made to actuate Bodies, may be put into different Bodies, according to their different Capacities; and when those Bodies are dead, they may possibly transmigrate into others; and when they have finish'd their Course, they were made for, may either be annihilated, or be rewarded by God, according to their several Natures and Capacities.

3. As there is such a necessary Relation between natural Causes and their Effects; so there is likewise between their natural Faculties and their Objects.

From hence it will follow, that whatever Faculty God made, he must have provided a suitable Object

ject for it, and for every Object a suitable Faculty, and there must be a natural Agreement between them.

And if so, we may conclude, that whatever Object he saw necessary by any Creature to be desired, in order to the Enjoyment of it; or feared in order to the shunning it; he must have given his Creatures suitable Appetites to desire, and suitable Fears to shun: And whatever is necessary to be perceived or understood, he must have given them Faculties to perceive and understand.

So, on the other Hand, we may conclude, that whatever our natural Appetites crave, or our Fears suggest, are also proper to be desired and fear'd. And that whatever the Senses of all sensible Beings perceive, and the Understandings of all reasonable Beings dictate at all Times, must not only be, but be, as they are perceived.

And if so, then an uniform Consent of all Mankind, concerning any Thing, which is the Object of their Faculties, must be a certain Argument of the Truth of that Thing.

Thus we see in general what Notions we are to conceive of the Creation of the World, considering it, as made by a God of Truth. We come now,

4. To consider the Creation, as the Effect of the Goodness of God.

The Goodness of God consists in an immutable Disposition to do Good to his Creatures; from whence we conclude, that he made every Creature to do them Good, according as their several Natures are capable of it; and if so, then,

1. Since there are several Kinds and Degrees of Creatures, it will follow, that they must be made for several Kinds of Happiness; and, therefore, as there are some Kinds of Creatures, that for Want of Life, are not capable of Happiness themselves, so they must be intended for the Happiness of others.

Again;

Again ; As there are other Creatures, which, tho' they are endued with Life and Sense, yet seem absolutely necessarily for the Happiness of Man ; so we must conclude, that such Creatures were so far intended for this Use.

But as they are capable of some Degree of Happiness themselves, we must conclude, that God designed them to be happy so far as should consist with their being useful to the Happiness of Men.

And as there is nothing made of this Kind, but was made of such a Nature, and provided with such Means, and placed in such a State, as was suitable to its End ; so every Thing, by acting according to its Nature, would not only attain its own Happiness, but also by being used by Man, it must contribute to the Happiness of Man.

Again ; As Man is composed of a sensitive Body, and a rational Soul join'd together ; so we must conclude, that God made Man, that he should be happy, both in Body and Soul ; and if so, then, first, as 'tis evident, that the rational Nature has a Faculty, by which it can consider and apprehend the Natures and Reasons of Things ; and another Faculty of chusing and acting according as Reason judges any Thing fit to be chosen or done ; so it will follow, that Mankind, as being rational Creatures, and made in a State of Perfection, must not only have been provided with all necessary Means of every Thing necessary to be known, and furnish'd with sufficient Power to do what Reason should direct to be done ; but also by considering and acting accordingly, they must have been as happy in their rational Nature, as such a Nature is capable of. And so,

2. As the bodily Nature of Man is composed of several Faculties and Powers, having Senses and Appetites suited to, and carried towards certain Objects so it will follow, that God made proper Objects for those Powers, &c. and put Man in such a State,
as

as was most proper for the Enjoyment of them; and that, in the Enjoyment of those Objects, he must have been as happy, as his bodily Nature is capable of being.

But as Man's two Natures were so united, that the Powers and Operations of the Body were placed under the Direction of the Mind, which is the moral Perfection of his Nature; so it will follow,

That Man could not be happy, but by acting according to that Subordination; but on the contrary, so far as this moral Perfection of his Faculties should be wanting, so far he must be wanting of perfect Happiness.

Lastly, If Mankind were made to be happy both in Soul and Body;

And if it be true, that Mankind were made in such a State, and furnished with such Means, as were most proper for their Happiness; then if it shall appear hereafter, that this Happiness was to be everlasting; then it will follow, that Man was not only immortal as to his Soul, but as to his Body also.

These are the Notions we cannot but receive, whilst we consider the Happiness of human Nature in itself. But,

2. As Man was made for Society, and without it he cannot be happy; so we must conclude, that he was provided with such Society as his Happiness required.

And if so, then since Mankind were not only made with Faculties of Speech; but also with another Faculty of multiplying their Species, and therefore must be supplied with proper Means for this: From hence we must conclude, that at the Creation, the first Society was not of Man with Man, but of Man with Woman, and in such Proportion as was best for increasing the Species, and most for the Happiness of Society.

And as no Society can be happy without mutual Benevolence;

Benevolence; so we must conceive, that Mankind was not only made with this natural Disposition, but also placed in a State suitable to it.

And therefore, since Mankind were originally made of the same Nature, with the same Desires and Necessities, and might want the same Things at the same Time, from whence might arise Contention; so from hence we must conclude, that whatever Number of Men and Women were made, as they were made for social Happiness, there must have been enough of every Thing made to satisfy their Wants.

But then, as Man is a rational Creature, and, by Consequence, his Happiness, such as depends upon a due Subordination of his Appetites to Reason; so tho' God made enough of every Thing for him, yet this would not make him happy, unless his Desires and Necessities should be regulated by Reason.

And if so, then as every Thing has a Nature suited to its End, we must conclude, that Mankind were so made, as not to desire any Thing, but what they wanted; nor any Thing any otherwise than should be consistent with mutual Benevolence. From hence, it will follow, that the natural State of Man, tho' all Things were in common, could not be a State of War. For if Want was to be the Rule of their Desires, since there was enough of every Thing, there could be no Reason for Strife; and as every one had a natural Love to every one, there could be no Inclination to it.

This doubtless must have been the natural State of Mankind, supposing there were ever so many made; but it is very natural to conceive, that there was but one Man and Woman originally made. For since Mankind were to be placed in such a State of Life as was best for the Preservation of mutual Benevolence; it seems most natural for this Purpose, that Mankind should proceed from one
Man

416 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

Man and Woman, that as they were undivided in their Original, so they should be undivided in their Affections.

Thus we see how we are to conceive of the Creation of the World, considering it as made by the Goodness of God: And supposing these Deductions to be true, we will infer,

That so far as we have any History of the Creation, which is found to agree with these Conclusions, so far we have Reason to conclude it true.

Now the *Old Testament* is the only Book that gives us any Account of this; and here, every Thing was made, as we have before shewn it ought to be, by the bare Act of the divine Will: *Let such a Thing be, and it was so.*

And that he made every Thing every Way suited to its End, and naturally capable of attaining it.

And that when he made Man, he not only made him good, but after his own Image, under which is comprehended all, that can be meant by Perfection and Happiness.

And as this Happiness was to be a Happiness of Soul and Body for ever; and, therefore, there was a Necessity by which the Body might be preserved in Being; so we are told of a Tree of Life, which might be intended, as a Preservative against all Decays of Nature, and a Remedy for all accidental Injuries.

And as it was necessary that Man, as a sociable Creature, so soon as he should be made, should be provided with Society, and that of Man with Woman, so we are told it was accordingly. And, therefore, this Account being agreeable to our foregoing Reasonings, which appear to be demonstratively true; so far we have Reason to conclude this Account of the *Old Testament* to be true.

Having shewn the absolute Perfection of God, and the Relation he bears to the World, as its Creator,
tor,

tor, I proceed to shew what Obligations of Duty arise from hence; and how these two Considerations will bring us to the Law of Nature, which is so much sought after. For,

1. As God is absolutely perfect, and loves every Thing in such Degree, as it comes nearer to his Perfection; so, by Consequence, the only Way to please God, is to be like him; and, therefore, we must endeavour to be perfect, as he is perfect.

And as his imitable Perfections are his Wisdom, Holiness, Truth and Goodness, it is a natural Duty to endeavour to be wise and holy, true and good; and, by Consequence, whatever is implied in these Perfections in God, which are imitable by us, is our Duty to imitate, and will be pleasing to him. So,

2. As God is the Creator of the World, I infer, that all the Powers God has given us, should be employed in such a Way, as is suitable to the End they were given for: And as they were made in due Subjection to Reason, so from hence it will follow, that our Faculties should be exercised as Reason approves; and when we find any Tendencies in us to the contrary, it must be our Duty to subdue them. So,

3. As God has put in us several Relations, it is his Will that we should behave ourselves suitably to those Relations;

So that if we do but consider what the several Relations we bear to one another, are, and what Actions arise from those Relations, this will give us a View into those Laws, which Nature obliges us to in this Respect.

This is a natural Proceeding on this Subject; but this will not answer my Design; and therefore I go,

Thirdly, To enquire what Notions we are to form of the Government of the World, considering it as governed by an absolutely perfect Being.

And since God, as an absolutely perfect Being, cannot act contrary to his Nature and Perfections, we must here again consider his Perfections, as so many Rules, by which to form our Notions of his Operations in the Government, as we have already done in the Creation of the World; and this will afford us as clear a Notion of it as Reason alone can furnish us withal.

Of the Government of the World.

I will begin my Observations from his Knowledge and Wisdom; and if we reflect, as we have shewn, that he cannot begin to know any Thing, and can never cease to know every Thing; and that he cannot do any Thing weakly, or erroneously, in respect either of the End, the Means, the Manner, or Season of acting;

From hence we must conclude, that nothing can happen in the World without his Knowledge foreseeing it, and his Wisdom disposing it for some End; and always for the best, but also in respect of the Suitableness of the Means, and the Seasonableness of the Time.

For he who knows the Natures and Ends of Things, as perfectly as he knows any Thing, and cannot possibly be mistaken, is equally capable of governing all Things, as any Thing.

2. As God is shewn to be in his Nature true, so must he be also in his Government, so as not to do any Thing contrary to Truth.

And, therefore, as Truth is the Reality of Things, as they are, or as they stand related to one another, we must conceive, that in the Government of the World, he will not act contrary to the Natures and Relations of Things.

As, therefore, there is a natural Relation of Agreement between Means and Ends, Effects and Causes, Faculties and Objects; so he must be conceived to govern the World according to these natural Relations, so as that there should be a natural Agreement between them.

And,

And, therefore, as we must conceive, that he will not produce natural Effects by supernatural Causes, when natural Causes will do; so on the other Hand, we must conceive, that the Relation between Faculties and their Objects shall be maintained;

And therefore, as God made various living Creatures with natural Appetites to preserve the *Individuum*, and made suitable Provision for them; so we must conceive, in the Government of the World, that there shall be always a like suitable Provision continued, so as that nothing shall want any Thing to its necessary Preservation.

As all living Creatures are likewise made with natural Appetites and Faculties for the Preservation of their Species: As it does follow, that as there must have been an equal Number of Males and Females, that there might be an Object suitable to every Faculty; so we must conceive, that there shall always be an equal Number of every Species continued:

And since the Males (if we apply this to Mankind) are exposed to greater Danger than the Females; from hence we must conclude, that in the Government of the World there shall be more Males born into the World, than Females, to answer this Defect.

And as there are Relations of Agreement and Disagreement of one Thing to another in Nature; so there are likewise instituted Relations of one Thing to another in Society; and, by Consequence, as God is true, we must conceive, that if he shall think fit to condescend to treat with us in our own Way, he will act suitably to these Relations.

And, therefore, as there are certain Signs and Words, that are agreed upon by every Society to be the outward Expressions of our inward Thoughts: From hence we must conclude, that if God shall treat with Mankind, and for that Purpose shall make

use of any Sign, or Word, or Action, either to express his own Will, or represent any other Thing by; that Sign, Word, or Action is a certain Declaration of his Will, and a certain Representation of the Thing.

And whatever he delivers to be believed, is really as he declares it; and whatever he expresses a Desire of, he does really desire it.

This must be so, if God be true.

3. As God is true, so is he good in the Government of the World. He orders every Thing as shall be best for the Happiness of his Creatures, and all his Methods are suited to that End.

And if so, since there are some Creatures not capable of Happiness themselves, they must be so order'd as is best for the Happiness of others.

And since there are other Creatures capable of Happiness in some Degrees, and yet are necessary to the Happiness of Man; it will follow, that their Happiness shall only be provided for in such Degree, as is consistent with their Subordination to Man.

From hence it will follow, that as all Things were at first put in such a State, as was suitable to the End they were made for; so all Things that are necessary to the Happiness of Man, were originally put in Subjection to Man. And,

Lastly, As the Happiness of Man does not only require a suitable Enjoyment of Objects, but likewise the Assistance of one another in Society; so in the Government of the World God has provided not only for his Happiness in his private, but also in his social Capacity.

But the Method of doing this will be best understood by considering the Holiness of God.

4. The Holiness of God consists in an immutable conformity of his Will and Operations to the Dictates of his infallible Reason; and as the natural Rule of Reason is the Natures and Reasons of Things;

Things; so this must likewise be the Rule of his Operations to do nothing but what the Natures and Reason of Things direct.

And if so, then as God cannot will or act any Thing but what is most reasonable; so that when we resolve Things into the sole Pleasure of God, we must not understand them as Acts of mere Will, but as Acts he had an infallible Reason for; and whatever he wills had a natural Goodness in it, in the Order of Conception antecedent to his Will, otherwise he would not have willed it:

And, therefore, whatever he does, he does it because it is reasonable to be done; and whatever he commands, he commands it, because it is, in its own Nature good, either simply, or relatively consider'd, as good, in order to an End; and so far as the End is good, so far the Means are good, and fit to be commanded.

And, therefore, as God cannot act without an End, nor command any Thing, but as a Means to an End; so whenever he commands indifferent Things, the Reason must be, that they are naturally fitted to attain some End, which that Command is intended for, tho' we may not be able to find it out.

2. As God cannot act without, so neither can he act contrary to Reason; and therefore, not act otherwise than as the Natures and Reasons of Things direct.

And if so, then,

1. We must conceive, that he will govern natural Things in a natural Way.

And, therefore, tho' the Goodness of God orders all Things so, as shall be most for the Happiness of his Creatures; yet so far as this Happiness depends upon the Use of natural Means, it cannot naturally be attained without them.

And by Consequence, tho' Man, in his rational Capacity, shall be provided with all Things necessary to his Happiness, in respect of the Means of knowing whatever is necessary to be known; as likewise in respect of a suitable Power, with suitable Rules and Motives, to do whatever is necessary to be done; yet as it is necessary in the Nature of the Thing, that those Means of Knowledge, and those Rules and Motives of Practice should be consider'd, and that Power be put forth into Action, before any Thing can be known or done; so we cannot expect any Happiness should arise from any Provision of Means, and Rules, and Motives, unless we will consider and act accordingly. And so,

2. Tho' Man be furnish'd with all Things necessary to his Happiness, in due Provision of proper Objects suited to its several Faculties, yet since there is a Necessity that we apply our selves to such Means, as are proper for this End, or else we shall never be the happier.

So, in the Government of the World, we must expect no Happiness will arise from this, unless we shall do accordingly. And if Mankind do Things contrary to their Happiness, they will be made unhappy by them.

And so likewise,

3. As the Happiness of Man must be a rational Happiness, and must consist in a rational Enjoyment of such Things as are suited to his Faculties; so there can be no Happiness expected from them in the Government of the World, unless we will use and enjoy them accordingly: But on the contrary, such Mischiefs will insue, as the Nature of Things so abused will produce; and also such as will arise from their Contrariety to Reason, in guilty Reflections of the Mind.

And so again,

4. Tho' God provides all Things, that may be for the Happiness of Society, yet since Men cannot

not be happy without one another, so they may be the Occasion of one another's Misery, according as their Actions are; therefore the Happiness of Mankind must depend upon their Actions; and if we can do all Things that our Happiness requires to be done; this is all that can be required on God's Part; and there can be no Happiness expected by us, unless we will do accordingly. And so,

2. As God governs natural Things in a natural Way, so we must conceive, that he will govern rational Agents in such a Way, as is suitable to a rational Nature.

And, therefore, as Man is an understanding and free Creature; if such a Creature be govern'd according to its Nature, it must be in such a Way, as is suitable both to his Understanding and Freedom.

And by Consequence, as God governs Man for his Happiness, and will provide him such Means, as are necessary to inform his Knowledge; and such Rules and Motives as are necessary to direct his Will to Practice; yet those Means will be such as his Understanding can apprehend; and those Rules must be possible and reasonable to be observed, and those Motives sufficient to incline his Will to observe them; and such as shall make it more for his Happiness to observe, than not observe them.

And then, as he is a free Agent, he must chuse or refuse, as he sees it, and by Consequence, whether he will be happy in himself, or in Society.

And according to the good or ill Use that Mankind are supposed to make of their Liberty; so we must form different Notions of the divine Government.

And, therefore, as every Thing, by acting according to its Nature, will attain the End it was made for; so Men, by acting according to their

424 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

Reason, will attain both their own private Happiness, and the Happiness of Society.

So should we suppose Mankind always acting according to Reason, no other Government could be necessary to the Happiness of the World, but to preserve Things in their proper Orders, and enable them to exert their Faculties, according to their several Ends and Uses; and if so,

Then as there is the same Reason for their Preservation as there was for their Creation, so long as they act according to their Natures; so we must conclude, that till Mankind act contrary to their Nature or Reason, which we call Sin, they would be preserved in that State in which they were created; and by Consequence, be immortally and everlastingly perfect and happy, both in Soul and Body, in this World.

From hence it will follow, that the Unhappiness, Imperfection, and Mortality of Mankind, and the Expectation of a future State, must have risen from Sin.

This is the only Notion we can form of the divine Government, whilst we consider Mankind as acting according to their Reason.

But if Mankind be consider'd as acting contrary to Reason, and therefore contrary to their own Happiness, and the Happiness of others; then as they act contrary to the End of their Creation and Preservation, so it may be natural to conceive, that such Persons should not be preserved.

And if so, then as the Reason of their supposed Destruction is their Sin; so we may conclude, that Mankind must be liable to Destruction upon the very first Act of Sin.

But as God made Mankind for such Degrees of Happiness, as their Nature is capable of, so we may conclude, that so long as they are capable of Happiness, so long they are capable of Preservation.

And since every one is capable of Happiness, that
acts

acts according to his Reason; it will follow, that tho' a Man has acted contrary to his Reason once, he shall be capable of Preservation so far, as it may be prevented for the future:

And if so, then whatsoever is necessary to prevent the first Sinner's Disobedience for the future, seems necessary to the Government of the World.

But since Men were made for the Happiness of others, as well as themselves; it is reasonable to conceive, that in the Preservation of a Sinner, God would provide for the Happiness of Society:

And, therefore, tho' the Sinner is preserved, that he may act according to Reason for the future, and by doing so, will contribute to his own and the Happiness of Society; yet as the preserving the first Sinner, might tend to make others sin, and so tend to the Unhappiness of Society, by making them think God regardless of their Actions, there seems a Necessity, that in the Preservation of the first Sinner, some Method should be taken to prevent the ill Consequences of that Preservation.

So that here are two Things to be provided for upon the first Act of Sin in the World; what Methods are most proper for these Purposes, God best knows. But if we might be permitted to conjecture, we might conclude,

1. That the most rational Way to make a Sinner act otherwise, is, to convince him he is in the Wrong; and the Way to do this, is, to let the Sinner feel some ill Effect of his Sin.

And the Way to shew that God is not regardless of the Actions of Men, is, to shew some Token of Displeasure when they sin, by inflicting some suitable Punishment for it, that other Sinners might be discouraged from following the Example.

And, therefore, from these Considerations we must conceive, that tho' God should not destroy the first Sinner, upon the very first Act of Sin, yet that he would punish him so, as to convince Mankind,

426 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

kind, that they should have no Encouragement to tread in his Steps.

This is the first Notion we can form of God's Government of the World, consider'd as a Thing distinct from Preservation.

And this, as it owes its Original to Sin, so we must conceive it would cease with it.

And, therefore, could we suppose Mankind, after the first Sin, acting according to their Reason for the future, we can suppose no Reason for any other Sort of Government for the future, but Preservation.

Because every Thing has a Nature suited to its End, and by acting according to its Nature, must attain its End; and since nothing has a natural Power, of acting contrary to its Nature, but Man; it will follow, that if Man shall act agreeably to his Reason, the End of all Things will be naturally attained:

And by Consequence, there can be no Need of any other Government, than to let Things act according to their Natures.

But then as Mankind must be left to their own Freedom, and may act contrary to their Reason, and thereby disturb the Order of Nature; so if they are supposed to have done thus after the first Sin, as there must arise new Occasion; so we must suppose new Methods of Government, in such manner as Mankind were capable of, and as God saw necessary for their Happiness, according to their Circumstances.

And tho' whilst Things act according to their Natures, we can see no Reason why God should, or would act contrary to the Natures of Things; yet when Things are fallen into a contrary State to that they were created in; then,

As there may be Reasons for contrary Methods of Government; so,

5. As God is free, he may act according to those
contrary

contrary Reasons; and by Consequence may act contrary to the Natures of Things, as he has Reason for it.

And if so, then tho' God governs natural Things in a natural Way and Order, as being the most natural Method to attain their End; yet when Things are so alter'd, as that it shall best serve the Ends, for which they were made, to act contrary to their primitive Nature and Order; he may do it in such Manner as he sees fit;

And so likewise,

2. Tho' he ordinarily governs rational Creatures in a rational Way; yet when he sees fit, he can supernaturally inform, or infatuate their Understandings; and he can determine their Wills, and either actuate or restrain their Passions so, as to make them do that they would not have done; and keep them from doing that Evil they would have done. And so again,

3. Tho' God be disposed to do Good to his Creatures, according to their Natures and Capacities; yet when the Natures and Capacities he gave them are alter'd, or when they act contrary to them, he may then alter his Methods of doing Good: He may do either by Prosperity or Adversity, by Pleasure or Pain, as he sees fit: And so,

Lastly, Tho' God be absolutely true, and can declare nothing but what is real; yet when the Reason of such Declaration is alter'd, he may act otherwise than he declared.

But then we must remember, that this Freedom is both a wise and holy Freedom; and by Consequence, as Wisdom will do nothing by extraordinary, when natural Means will do;

So Holiness will do nothing contrary to the Natures and Reasons of Things any farther than as their Natures and Reasons are alter'd; nor any farther than that Alteration does require it.

And by Consequence, so far as the Wisdom of
God

428 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

God shall see, that by acting according to the Natures of Things, the End of the Creation may be equally attained; so, tho' the Natures of Things are alter'd, so far we may reasonably conceive, he will not act contrary to their Natures.

And, therefore, 1. We may conclude, that tho' he may act contrary to the Nature of natural Causes and rational Agents; and tho' he may suspend, or over-rule the Powers of the former; and he may supernaturally inform, or infatuate the Understandings, or actuate or restrain the Wills of the latter; yet he will never do it, but where there is a Necessity, and where the Happiness of the World cannot be attained without it.

And so, tho' God may do Good in what Manner he sees fit, yet, as Pleasure is most agreeable to the Natures of Mankind, so far as they are capable of Happiness by Pleasure, so far we must conceive, he will not give them Pain.

And, *lastly*, Tho' God may revoke and alter his Declarations, or, as he sees fit, may act contrary to them, yet it must be only so far as the Natures and Reasons of Things are alter'd. And, therefore, when God promises a Favour, or threatens a Punishment upon a certain Reason; tho' God cannot be obliged, when that Reason is ceased, to perform his Promise, or inflict the Punishment.

And tho', when God gives Laws of a mutable Nature for mutable Reasons; when the Reasons of such Laws are altered, he may alter his Declarations concerning them; yet so long as the Natures and Reasons are the same, so long his Declarations and Operations will be the same.

And, by Consequence, when God commands any Thing to be observed or avoided, or denounces any Thing to be inflicted; the Reason of which is founded in the Nature of Things, such Laws, and Threatnings cannot be disannull'd, so long as the Nature of Things continue; and we must conceive, that
in

in such Cases God will neither revoke, nor act contrary to them.

Thus far then have we discover'd the Nature of God, both in his Perfections in themselves, and the outward Manifestation of them in Acts of Creation and Government. Which being granted, I shall endeavour to demonstrate the general Body of all Religion; but that we may do this more clearly, I will look back a little, and reflect upon what we have before proved.

What is the true State of Nature.

First, We must remember that the original State of Mankind is a State of Perfection.

From whence we may be able to form a right Notion of a true State of Nature; for as it is self-evident, that that must be the true Nature of Things, which they received when they were made;

So, by Consequence, nothing can be properly said to be in a State of Nature, any further than it can be said to be in a State of Perfection: And, therefore, so far as Mankind are fallen from Perfection, so far they are in an unnatural State.

And if we call this a State of Nature, we ought to call it an imperfect State, in Opposition to the true primitive State of Nature, which was a State of Perfection.

And without this Distinction we shall not speak of this Matter without Confusion.

What Mankind stood in need of in a State of pure Nature.

Secondly, As we have shewn, that Mankind were made in a State of Perfection:

So 'tis necessary to be observed, as we have proved, that they were made by the Wisdom of God for some End, and by the Goodness of God for Happiness; and that they were put in such a State as was proper for the Attainment of it.

And, by Consequence, they must be provided with the necessary Means of Knowledge of every
Thing

Thing necessary to be known; and furnish'd with sufficient Power to do whatever was necessary to be done. And if so, then,

1. Since the End and Happiness of Man consists in being Partaker of the divine Nature; it will follow, that if there be a Necessity, that Man should be informed of his End and Happiness, there is the same Necessity that he should be informed of the Nature of God, in which his End and Happiness consists. And if so, then,

2. As the Reason of his being informed of his End and Happiness, and the Means of attaining them, with the necessary Rules and Motives of Action, is, that these Motives should be complied with, and those Rules be followed, and those Means employed in the Attainment of this End and Happiness; from hence it will follow,

That so soon as Mankind were capable of understanding and enjoying Happiness, so soon must they have had this Information given them. And if so, then,

3. Since Mankind were created perfect in their Nature, and, therefore, capable of all this, so soon as they were made; it will follow, that they must have had this Information, so soon as they were made.

The Means of Knowledge in a State of pure Nature.

As to this, we must conceive, from the Holiness of God, that as he always acts according to the Natures and Reasons of Things.

So the Means of Information must be such, as the Nature of Things to be known, and the Reason of the Knowledge of them requir'd.

And, by Consequence, as those Things that are necessary, but cannot be known in a natural Way, do require a supernatural: And as those Things that can be known in a natural Way, do require no more than natural Means:

So we must conclude, 1. That if there was any
Thing

Thing necessary to be known, which our first Parents could not know by Reason in a natural Way, so soon as their Occasions requir'd the Knowledge of it, it was certainly made known by a supernatural Revelation: But,

The Rule of Reason.

2. As those Things that lay within the Compass of Reason, were to be known in the Use of such natural Means of Knowledge as were afforded them.

So we must conclude, they had no Revelation concerning them.

By natural Means of Knowledge, I mean the Natures and Reasons of Things:

For Knowledge is the Perception of Things as they are in their own Natures, or as they are related to each other.

And as those Things, which we apprehend to agree or disagree, we therefore judge to be fit, or unfit for such Purposes:

So that Fitness or Unfitness, for such Purposes, is a Reason arising from the Natures of Things for the Fitness and Unfitness of such and such Operations.

And when we make a right Judgment of Things, as we are then said to know these Things, and as our Reason is then said to be right:

So, by Consequence, if we would form a right Knowledge of Things, the natural Rules to form our Notions by, is, to consider the Natures and Reasons of them. And, if so,

Then as every Thing had its Nature from God, so whatever Means of Information our Reason finds out by considering the several Natures which God has made Things of, and the Relations he has placed them in; this we may call the natural Revelation of God; and the Matter of such Revelation, natural Religion.

The Substance of natural Religion.

Since

432 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

Since we have proved the Necessity of Man's being informed, so soon as he was made,

First, Of the Nature of God, and his own Happiness.

Secondly, Of the Means and Rules to attain this Happiness by.

Thirdly, Of the Motives to enforce the Observation of those Means and Rules.

It will be proper to enquire how far the Knowledge of these several Particulars is capable of being discovered by Reason; and whether there was any Thing further necessary to be known, which our first Parents, in a State of Purity, could not know but by Revelation.

First, Of the Nature of God, how far it is discoverable by Reason.

What Reason may find out concerning this, I have already consider'd; if there be any Thing necessary to be added, it can be only to enquire, whether it can be supposed, that Man, at his Creation, could be capable of finding out all those Speculations, that we have deliver'd concerning God. In Answer to which it is certain, that his Reason was either capable of finding it out, or it was revealed to him. And therefore I will proceed to enquire,

Secondly, What Notions Reason would furnish him withal, concerning the true End and Happiness of Man.

The End for which God made all Things, was the Good of his Creatures; and by Consequence, that which is the true Good, must be the true End of Man.

Now the only Good that God could aim at in the Creation, was himself; for since he is the sole Fountain of Being, and Perfection of all Good; so before the Creation he was the only Being and Good; and by Consequence the only End, and the only Good, he could intend in the Creation, must be himself. But yet, as he could not want, and therefore,

fore, could not aim at the receiving any Good to himself; so it will follow, that it must be some Good to be imparted to his Creatures, and, by Consequence, the Good that he intended for Man in the Creation, was the imparting of himself, or his Perfections to him.

And if so, then, since Happiness is nothing but the Enjoyment of Good, as God is the highest Good, it must be the highest Happiness of Man, to have the divine Nature and Perfections communicated to him in the highest Degree he is capable of.

Here then we must consider what Degrees of God's Perfections the State and Condition of Man is capable of.

Now as to the Independency, Necessity, Immutability, Omnipresence, and Infinity of God, these only belong to a self-existent Being. But to be spiritual and everlasting, may be imparted to a Creature.

And as we may from thence infer, that we have, so we are generally supposed, upon very good Reason, to have such a spiritual and everlasting Nature, which we call the Soul, imparted to us.

So likewise, as for the Perfections of Life, Sense and Reason, these are not only communicable to a Creature; but we find we have them in some Degree.

If then the Happiness of Man consists in being like God in these Perfections, we must form our Conceptions of this Happiness of Man according as we conceive of these Perfections in God.

And, therefore, as the Perfection of Life in God consists in doing all that is possible for him to will; and the Perfection of Sense, in enjoying all the Pleasure that is possible for him to enjoy; and the Perfection of Reason in the absolute Comprehension of the Natures and Reasons of Things; and such an immutable Holiness of Will, as never to chuse or act any Thing, but according to the Natures and Reasons of Things:

434 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

So the Happiness of Man must consist in the highest Degree of these Perfections, that his Nature is capable of.

And therefore, when Man in respect of his rational Nature knows the Natures and Reasons of Things, as fully as he is capable of, and his Will is govern'd by his Reason :

And when in respect of his bodily Nature he has his Faculties of Operation perfect, and regularly employ'd upon proper Objects, then he is in a true State of natural and perfect Happiness.

So that in one Word, the chief Happiness of a rational Nature consists in right Reason and Holiness : For the clear Knowledge, and true Judgment of the Nature and Reasons of Things, we call right Reason ; and the Government of our Wills by right Reason, we call Holiness.

And as we are the most like God when our Knowledge and Holiness are in the greatest Perfection ; so when we speak of the Happiness of Man, as consisting in the Perfection of his Nature, or in right Reason and Holiness, or in the Enjoyment of God ; these are but different Names of the same Thing.

The Notion of Happiness being thus explained, we may the better discover,

How Happiness is to be attained.

Thirdly, What those Means, or Rules, or Laws are, by which this Happiness is to be attained.

By Means, or Rules, or Laws, the same Thing is to be meant : For whatsoever is a necessary Means to an End, the same is a necessary Rule to be observed to attain that End : And whatsoever God has made necessary to be observed, as a Rule, it is his Will we should observe it ; and whatsoever it is his Will we should observe as a Rule, that is certainly a Law, by which we are to act.

And, therefore, the Means that are necessary to the Attainment of this Happiness, may likewise be called the Laws of our Happiness : The
Necessity

Necessity of which being founded in the Natures of Things, and thereby signified to be the Will of him, who is the Author of that Nature and Necessity; they are likewise called the Laws of Nature.

But then, as the Means that are necessary to the Happiness of Mankind are different, according as they are consider'd in a State of Purity, or Corruption:

So in treating upon the Laws of Nature, it will be proper to carry this Distinction along with us.

The Laws, which obliged in a State of Purity, we will call *primary* Laws of Nature.

And those whose Obligation arose from our Corruption, we will call the *secondary* Laws.

The Laws of Nature are the Means that are necessary to our Happiness, in the very Natures of Things; and, therefore, to find out these Laws, we must see what the Nature of our Happiness requires.

Our Happiness then consists in a right Apprehension and Judgment of the Natures and Reasons of Things, which is call'd right Reason; and in being govern'd both in our Will and Operations, by right Reason. And from hence it is easy to discover, what are the natural Means to this Happiness; and what are the natural Rules by which Man was to act in a State of Nature.

The Laws of Nature.

For, 1st, If Man cannot be happy without right Reason, or a right Apprehension of the Natures and Reasons of Things, whatsoever is a necessary Means to right Reason, must be a necessary Means to Happiness; and by Consequence, the first Thing necessary to be done, in order to a right Apprehension of Things, must be the first Law of Nature; and that is,

To consider the Nature and Reason of Things, how far they are fit to be chosen or done, before we pretend to chuse or act.

436 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

2. If Man cannot be happy without chusing and acting, according as his Reason apprehends Things worthy to be chosen or done; then as it is another necessary Means to our Happiness, so it is another general Law of Nature.

Not to chuse or act any Thing without, or contrary to Reason.

On these two general Laws of Nature the whole Body of natural Law is comprehended. As for Instance;

1st, If we must not chuse, or act without Reason, we are hereby obliged not to act without some End.

And since that which Reason approves to be done, is the very Notion of Good, and by Consequence whatever Reason proposes, as an End, must be some Good: As we are hereby obliged not to act without an End, so we are by Consequence obliged not to act without an Intention of some Good, either to ourselves or others.

And as the Rule of Reason is the Natures and Reasons of Things; so we are obliged to do nothing, but with an Intention of such Good, as our Reason apprehends the Natures and Reasons of Things require.

So that by this we are obliged to the general Laws of Prudence and Goodness.

2. If we must not chuse, or act contrary to Reason, by this we are taught the great Laws of Truth and Sincerity.

3. If we must not act, but as our Reason apprehends the Natures and Reasons of Things require; here we have the great Laws of Moderation and Fortitude.

And therefore to apply this;

1. As there are many Things made of the same Nature, and for the same End, which we therefore call Equals:

So it will follow, that we must behave ourselves towards

towards them equally alike: And by Consequence, as all Mankind, by being made for the same End, and of the same Nature, are so far naturally Equals: They must be dealt with equally; and whatsoever Reason directs to be done to any one, in respect to his Nature, the same it must direct to be done to all.

And, therefore, if our own Nature be worthy our Love, so likewise is the Nature of every other Man.

If our Nature, as such, requires good Offices from others; the same Nature in others, requires the like good Offices from us.

And if by our Nature we have such Relations to others, as require, that they be true to us; the same Relation in them to us, requires the same from us to them.

2. As there are some Things more perfect than others in themselves, some more conducive to our Happiness than others, which we call good. By this general Law we are not only obliged to prefer those Things in our Affections, which our Reason prefers in its Judgment; but also in such Proportion as it judges them worthy to be preferr'd.

And, therefore, as the best Things are more worthy to be known, and to be loved than others;

So we are obliged to know and love those Things above others; and also so far, as they are worthy of it.

And by Consequence, as God is the most perfect Being in himself, and the greatest Good we are capable of; so it will follow, that we must not only endeavour to know and love him above all; but also, that we must know him with all possible Degrees of Knowledge; and love him with all possible Degrees of Love; thus we are taught how to regulate those Passions that we commonly call concupiscible, which Virtue we call Moderation.

By the same Rule we are taught to manage our

Hatred and Fear, Grief and Anger; the Regulation of which is called Fortitude.

But as in a State of pure Nature, Mankind must have been entirely govern'd by their Reason, and been happy so long as they continued to act according to Reason; therefore, as there could be no Manner of Reason for Hatred or Fear, or Grief, or Anger; so we must conclude they arose from Sin.

And when Sin came into the World, there was soon Reason enough for them all; and by this Rule we are taught how to regulate them all, *viz.* That these Passions be directed towards their respective Objects in such Manner, as our Reason apprehends they are worthy of our Hatred or Fear, our Grief or Anger. Thus we are taught to regulate our Passions.

4. If we must not chuse or act any Thing, but as Reason directs; here we have a general Law of Justice and Equity.

As, 1. Since there are some Beings mere Substance, and incapable of Happiness themselves, and therefore made for the Happiness of others; if we must act rationally, we are obliged to use these in no other Measure, than is necessary to the End they were made for:

And by Consequence, so far as they were made for the Happiness of Man, they must be used in such Degree as his Happiness requires: So that here we have a Law against Excess in the Use of inanimate Creatures.

2. As there are other Beings that have Life and Sense, which tho' made for the Happiness of others, are yet capable of some Degrees of Happiness themselves, if we must act justly; we must not deprive them of their Lives, Senses, or Pleasures, any further than is necessary for the Happiness of those they were made for.

So that here we have a Law against all Cruelty in the needless Destruction of such Creatures.

And

And from hence we must conclude, that in a State of pure Nature, where Men were entirely govern'd by the Natures and Reasons of Things, they never eat Flesh, till there were no other Things that were fit to be eaten; because the Necessity of killing them for the Happiness of Man, could be the only natural Reason of doing it. And by Consequence, the first killing of Beasts must have arisen from a Sense of such a Necessity, or from Revelation.

3. Man being composed of a sensitive Body and a rational Soul, each capable of a different Happiness, if we must act justly, we are obliged to act according to the Nature both of Soul and Body. And therefore,

1. As it is the Nature of the rational Soul, so it is the Duty of every Man to chuse and act according to his Reason.

And as every one has a rational Soul of his own, it must be the Duty of every one, not only to act and chuse according to his Nature, but also to consider and chuse for himself.

2. As the Body is composed of a certain Number of Parts, endued with a Principle of Life, we are obliged not to deprive ourselves, or others, of any Part of the Body; much less, take away our own, or any other's Life.

And as the Body has several Powers suited to several Objects, so if we must act according to the Nature of the Body, it is necessary to our Happiness, and by consequence, a natural Law; that we may apply ourselves to such Objects, and such Operations, as our Powers and Faculties require.

But then as all the Powers and Faculties of human Nature were made in a natural Subjection to Reason; so they must not be gratified in any other Manner, than Reason shall allow to be consistent with the Natures and Reasons of Things; that is, with the Nature of those several Faculties, and

the Reason of the Exercise and Gratification of them.

As we have Appetites, which tend to Eating and Drinking, tho' our Happiness requires, that these Appetites be gratified, yet we must not gratify them any further than is consistent with Reason.

And, therefore, as the natural Reason of Eating and Drinking is Hunger, and Thirst; so in a State of pure Nature, Men were obliged not to eat and drink longer than till their Thirst and Hunger should be allay'd;

So that here we have a general Rule of Temperance.

And so likewise,

2. As we have several Faculties that cannot be exercised but in Society; and there are many Things our Faculties require, which cannot be had but in Society:

So we are obliged to enter into such Society as our Faculties require; and to exercise those Faculties, in such Operations, as the Nature and Reason of *Things* require.

So that here we have the great Law of Humanity.

Now those natural Faculties and Necessities, upon which the Necessity of Society is founded, are *three*;

The Faculty of Speech, of multiplying our Species, and that of mutual Assistance:

And as these Things made Society always necessary to the Happiness of Mankind:

So 'twas always equally necessary to the Happiness of Society, that these Faculties should be exercised on their proper Objects; and such Assistance afforded as those Necessities require.

But then as all our Faculties and Operations were to be regulated by Reason, according to the Natures and Reasons of Things; therefore,

1. As our Conversation must be regulated according to the Natures and Reasons of Things:

So

So it will follow, that it must be not only agreeable to the Nature and Reason, and End of Speech: And by Consequence, such as shall truly express our Thoughts, but also such as is agreeable to the Nature of such Things as we have to speak on, so as to talk with one another, of the most worthy Things, and most conducive to our Happiness; and by Consequence, that our Discourses be chiefly upon God.

This was the Rule, and this was the Practice undoubtedly in a State of Purity.

2. As to Multiplication, if our Faculties must be regulated according to the Natures and Reasons of Things, it will follow,

1. That our natural Powers of Multiplication must not be used in any other Manner than is suitable to the Nature of Men.

2. That they must be used for no other End but Multiplication: And by Consequence, no longer than till Reason apprehends this End is attained. And if so, we may conclude, that in a State of Purity, our first Parents had no other Appetites one to another in this Kind, but what were agreeable to these Laws.

And by Consequence, that had they continued in that State, there must have been some certain Times and Seasons for carnal Familiarity among Mankind then, as we see in other Creatures now.

3. As the Faculties of Multiplication ought only to be used but for Multiplication; so it will follow, that Multiplication ought not to be endeavour'd, but for the attaining the End of Multiplication. And by Consequence, as the End of Multiplication is the Happiness of Society, it ought to be endeavour'd no otherwise than the Happiness of Society will allow:

And if so then from hence we may conclude, that as every Thing was made of such a Nature, and put in such a State, as was best for the End
it

it was made for; and by Consequence, since Mankind were not only made with Faculties of Multiplication, for the Happiness of Society, but provided with such Objects as were most suitable to the Nature and End of those Faculties; it will follow, that whatever Provision was made for Multiplication at the Creation, the same must be the best Way for the Happiness of the World: And therefore, if it can be made appear, that there was at first but one Man and Woman made, and appropriated to each other in the Way of Marriage, this must be best for the Happiness of the World.

3. As to mutual Assistance, if this must be regulated by the Natures and Reasons of Things; it will follow, that it must be not only such as is agreeable to the Nature of Man, but also in such Manner, as is most for the Happiness of those that need it.

These are the general Laws of Society, and are such as came in with our very Natures; and such, therefore, I call *primary* Laws of Nature.

But there are other Things equally necessary to the Support and Happiness of Society, which came in only with what we call the Fall; and which, tho' we are obliged to observe; yet the Obligation arises only from the Corruption of our Nature, *viz.* the Determination of Property, the Settlement of coercive Government, and all those Laws which are necessary to the Security of Property and Government.

And tho' these are all truly Laws of Nature, as being necessary to the present Happiness of Mankind; yet as this was not the first State of Mankind, so I call these *secondary* Laws of Nature.

1. As for Property.

By this is meant some peculiar Right one, or more Persons have to any Thing, exclusive of all others Pretences to it.

By Right is meant a Power of having any Thing granted by a Law.

And,

And, therefore, as where there is no Law, there is no Right; and by Consequence, no Property; so if there were any such Thing as natural Property, there must be some natural Law, which gives the Person the Privilege of enjoying the Thing he has a Property in, exclusive of any other's Pretences to it.

But as no Man, in a State of Purity, hath any natural Right to any Thing further than he wants it: And as all Men were originally made of the same Nature, and liable to the same Wants; so by Consequence, they must all be made with the same natural Right to every Thing they wanted; and therefore could not justly exclude one another from enjoying any Thing they had, so soon as their own natural Wants were supplied: And therefore, in a pure State of Nature, there could be no such Thing as Property.

The same will likewise appear concerning coercive Government, if we consider, that the State of Man's Innocence was a State of Perfection, wherein as Reason was to be his Guide; so his rational Will, and bodily Operations, were subject to its Directions;

So that whatever Reason required, or forbid, every one must naturally have observed of his own voluntary Motion; and no sooner would the Understanding have approved any Thing, but his Will would have prompted him to Action. And in such a State as this, all other Governments would have been useless, but that in our own Bosoms.

And as there could be no Need of any other Laws, than those our Reason would direct us to; so there can be no Reason to think, there would have been any other Laws but these.

If there were, it must be either from God, or from Man; the former cannot be supposed, unless the Wisdom of God can be thought to do that by extraordinary, which may be done as well by ordinary Means:

Neither

Neither can it be the latter, unless the Reason of Man, which was then govern'd by the Natures and Reason of Things, can be supposed to direct them to the making of such Laws, as there was no Need of, and no Reason for.

Thus we see what Laws we are directed to, by the Consideration of the Natures of the several Orders of Beings in the World thus far: But,

4. There is another Being above all these, who is absolutely perfect, who is the Creator and Governor of the World, which Being we call God:

And if we are to act according to the Natures and Reasons of Things; and by Consequence, must behave ourselves in respect of God, so, as is agreeable to the Nature of his Perfections, and our Dependence upon him; here we have a new Scene of Laws open'd to us, which we call the Duties towards God. And therefore,

1. As God is absolutely perfect, it is a natural Duty to know the Nature of God, and to love him, as much as we are capable of. And,

2. As our Happiness consists in being like God; and the more we are like God, the more happy we must be; so it will follow,

That if we would attain that Happiness we were made for, we ought to endeavour to be as like God as our Nature is capable of being; and if so, from hence it will follow,

3. That as it is our Duty to know and love God, so our Actions must be such, as our Reason apprehends are suitable to our Knowledge of him; and to that Esteem which is implied in the very Nature of loving him.

4. As God is a Being on whom we absolutely depend; so if we would act according to the Natures of Things, we must in all Respects be obedient to his Will, whensoever, or howsoever, made known to us. And,

5. As the natural Reason of this moral Obedience

ence to his Will, is, that we are naturally subject to his Will; so if we will act according to the Reasons of Things, it must be our Duty not only to act according to his Will, but the Reason of doing it must be a Sense of our Subjection to him. And if so, then,

6. Since it was the Will of God to make us, that we might be happy, not only in ourselves, but in one another, it must be his Will, and our Duty, to do those Things that are necessary to the Happiness of ourselves, and others; and to do it out of a Sense of our Duty, and out of Obedience to his Will.

These are the Duties Mankind were obliged to even in a State of Purity:

But as for those Duties to God, that arise from a Sense of Want, Weakness, or Affliction, and the like; these came in only with the Fall.

For in a State of Purity, as Mankind were perfect in their Natures, and, therefore, without Weakness, so they were provided with every Thing necessary to their Happiness, and with proper Powers to enjoy them, and, therefore, without Want.

And as they were sure, so long as they acted according to their Natures, of the Continuance of this Perfection and Happiness to them, so they could have no Reason to fear either Danger, or Affliction.

And, therefore, such Duties as Prayer, which betokens Want and Patience, which implies Suffering, were not Duties belonging to a State of Purity.

And tho' they are properly Laws of Nature, and necessary to the Happiness of Mankind, as they are at present, yet they are such, as must be called *secondary* Laws, which we should not have been obliged to in a State of Purity; which, as it was a State of Perfection, seems capable of no other Act of Devotion towards God, but Praise.

These

These Things being thus clear'd, we have a perfect View of the Foundations of the civil Law, and may be able from hence, to fix the just Bounds of natural Right and Wrong. For,

By Right is meant a Power or Privilege of acting, or enjoying any Thing granted by a Law :

And, therefore, whatsoever the Laws of Nature oblige Men to act, or enjoy, in order to their Happiness, the same do they give them a natural Right to act and enjoy.

And, therefore, as by the Knowledge of the Laws and Obligations of Nature, we must so far understand the Rights of Nature; so by acting contrary to those natural Laws and Obligations, as we shall act contrary to natural Right, and, therefore, must necessarily do wrong; so this Wrong must be differently aggravated, according to the Nature and Obligations of those Laws.

And if so, we see the Absurdity of these following Propositions, *viz.*

That there are no Laws in a State of Nature.

That the Obligation to moral Duties is owing to the Scriptures.

That the Rules Mankind had to walk by before the Scriptures, were alterable at the Will of the civil Sovereign.

That Man can do no Injury in such a State :

That this State is a State of War.

All which are false, if the foregoing Reasonings are true;

For, if that, by which God signifies his Will to us, is a Law; and if the Nature and End of every Thing be a Signification of God's Will, as to that Thing; then, we have shewn, there are Laws of Nature. And,

If the Natures, &c. of Things were determined before the Scriptures were revealed; then the Obligation to moral Duties does not depend upon the Scriptures: And unless the civil Sovereign can
cause,

cause, that Happiness shall not be the End of our Creation, and that such and such Actions shall not be the necessary Means to our Happiness; he cannot alter the Rules Men are naturally obliged to walk by. And,

If what God has made necessary to our Happiness be a Good to us, and the contrary an Evil; then 'tis plain, that there are many Things good and evil. And,

If what God has made necessary to our Happiness we have a Right to; and to deprive us of this, be to do a Wrong; then every Man in a State of Nature is capable of Injury. And,

If we are obliged in a State of Nature, to Love and Goodness, Justice and Truth; then a State of Nature cannot be a State of War; nor can mutual Compacts of Fidelity be void in it, unless War be reconcileable with Love, and Unfaithfulness with Justice and Truth.

We come now to consider the next Thing to be enquired into, *viz.*

Motives to enforce the Law of Nature.

Lastly, The Motives, by which the Observation of these Laws were enforced.

Now, that there are such Motives, is evident;

For since Mankind were made for everlasting Happiness; and these Laws are nothing but the necessary Means for the Attainment of that Happiness, then here is a suitable Motive annexed to these Laws, to enforce the Observation of them.

For that I call a suitable Motive, which is sufficient to incline a reasonable Will to chuse one Thing rather than another; and as the Object of a reasonable Choice is good; so that only can be sufficient to incline a reasonable Will to chuse Obedience, which makes it more for our Interest to obey than disobey.

Now such a Motive we have in this Case.

For to be happy everlastingly, as it is the utmost
End,

448 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

End, so it is the utmost Desire of all Mankind; and to be excluded from Happiness, as it is contrary to the End, so 'tis contrary to the Desire of Mankind.

And, therefore, since we are assured, that we can only attain this Happiness by the Observation of these Laws; our Reason must necessarily be convinced, that it is more for our Interest to obey, than disobey them.

And, by Consequence, here is a sufficient Motive to enforce the Observation of these Laws.

But if to this we add what we have already urged, that a Sinner should, upon the first Transgression, either be destroyed, or suffer such Things as are proper to bring him to Repentance; and to deter others from following his Example; then here was a farther Motive to Obedience.

These are the main Body of natural Religion; and so far as it appears they are discoverable by Reason, so far we must conclude, that our first Parents, in a State of pure Nature, had no other Revelation concerning them.

We come, *secondly*, to enquire, whether there was any Thing further necessary to be known in a State of Purity, which our first Parents could not know by Reason; and, therefore, required a supernatural Revelation.

Several Revelations necessary in a State of Purity.

Now there were three Things of this Kind which required a Revelation: One concerning Food, another concerning Marriage, the third concerning Language.

1. A Revelation was necessary concerning *Food*.

Indeed, as for Drinking, as there was nothing to be drank but Water, it wanted no great Strength of Reason to infer, that as that must necessarily be the Thing design'd, so it must be proper to be drunk. And, therefore, there could be no need of a Revelation, as to that.

But

But as there was a great Variety of Food; tho' it was certain, something must be eaten, yet Reason could not possibly judge so soon as was necessary to know it, whether all these Things were good for Food, or not.

For tho' Reason might conclude in general, that whatever God made was good in some Respect, or for some Creatures or other; yet it could not be rationally inferr'd, that it was good for Food, or good for Man; neither could it be discover'd in a natural Way without long Observation and Experience.

And, therefore, there must have been some extraordinary Revelation to direct him in the Choice of proper Food.

But then, again; it might be argued, that since he required a Supply of Food; he might thence conclude, that whatever his Appetites carried him to, must be proper to be enjoy'd.

And tho' he could not find out by Reason, what was fit to be eaten, and what was not; yet since there was a Necessity of eating something, if there was any Thing unfit to be eaten, his Happiness required some Revelation of it.

And, therefore, if there was no such Revelation given, Reason would conclude, that Man might lawfully and safely eat of every Thing his Appetite inclined him to.

And, by Consequence, tho' according to our former Argument, we inferr'd a Necessity of some Revelation to direct our first Parents in the Choice of proper Food; yet according to the latter Way of arguing, there seems to be no Revelation necessary, unless there was something dangerous to be eaten.

And if so, from hence we must conclude, that either there was no Revelation given to them concerning Food;

Or if there was, there was something bad for Food.

Now whether there was any such Revelation,

cannot be known, but by History or Tradition. And, therefore,

If any such History or Tradition should be found that gives us any Account of this Matter, so far as it agrees with the foregoing Reasonings, so far we must conclude it true.

Now such a History we have in the first Book of *Moses*. Where we are no sooner told of the Creation of Man, and of his being placed in a Garden, the Fruits of which were to be his Food; but God is represented as giving him Instructions, of which of those Fruits he might safely eat.

2. Another Thing necessary to be known in a State of Purity, was that concerning Marriage, or the Multiplication of his Species.

Now there are but two Ways possible for the Multiplication of Mankind, *viz.* either by such an Appropriation of Persons to Persons, as we call Marriage;

Or else by an undetermin'd Liberty of all to all.

And, therefore, if one of these Ways would be more for the Happiness of Society, than the other, it is necessary Mankind should be informed of it.

And whether Reason is capable of discovering this, is the Question.

Now for a Light into this Matter, we will enquire what Number of Persons might be originally created, for the Increase of Mankind.

In order to which it may be observed, that whatever Number was made, they were all made perfect, as we have shewn: And, therefore, as they were all equal in their natural Faculties, so they were all equally capable of increasing their Species. And as we have shewn, that they must have had Objects suited to their Faculties, so they must be equally provided with such Objects.

And if so, as there must then have been an equal Number of Men and Women; so we must conclude, that Mankind was originally increased by Pairs; by which, I mean, that either they must have been
born

born two at a Time, or else a Male first, and then a Female.

And since we observe in Nature a Power in the Female Sex, by which they are *capaces generationis*, & *Speciei propagandæ*, sooner than the Males by a Year at least; we may conclude, that the first Child was a Male.

But tho' every Person had a natural Right to one, it does not from hence follow, that they had any natural Right to any particular one, or that they must be confined to the same one.

Indeed, if we suppose only two Persons, they had a natural Right the one to the other, as being under a necessary Confinement to each other.

But as the Reason of their Confinement to each other, was, that there were no other Persons to multiply by, but themselves; so Reason could not from thence conclude, that they should continue under such Confinement, when there should come to be more Persons capable besides themselves.

But much less could it conclude, that their Posterity should be so confined, who were under no such Necessity.

All that the Nature, &c. of Things requires, is, that every one have such an Object suited to his Faculties, as to answer the End and Reason of those Faculties, which is the Increase of the Species; and so long as it is thus, the Nature and Reason of Things is so far answer'd, whether by one Object or another.

No, on the contrary, we have shewn, that in the first State of Mankind, all Things were common; and that no one could have any natural Right to any Thing, any longer than he wanted it.

And, therefore, Mankind, as having natural Faculties and Appetites for the Increase of the Species, had a natural Right to one another's Assistance, in the Gratification of those Appetites for that End; yet it could be no longer, than those Appetites continued, or that End was attained.

And, therefore, since we have shewn, that they had no Appetites to one another any longer, than till Generation was effected; it will follow, that after that, as they could in this Respect have no further Want of one another, so neither could they have any further Right to one another; and, by Consequence, must be naturally free and unconfined to one another.

'Tis true, we have shewn, that as every one has a rational Principle of his own, so every one must choose for himself; and what any Man is obliged to do, so far we have shewn, he has a Right to do.

And, by Consequence, any two Persons, as having that Right, might agree to appropriate themselves to each other.

But, then, as Reason is the Guide of a rational Choice, so the Natures and Reasons of Things are the Guide of Reason; and, therefore, unless we can conceive something in the Nature of Things to determine Mankind in a State of Purity, to choose always the same Person for the Increase of the Species, any more than the same Food to eat, when all Things appear'd perfect and agreeable.

And unless we can find out something, that might determine them to think, that it would be more for the Happiness of Society for one to be appropriated to one, than for all to have a Liberty; we must conclude, that in such a State, they could not incline to such a Choice:

Now, that it would prejudice Society, should Mankind be permitted to multiply without Confinement, is owned by all civilized Nations.

But whether this was discoverable by natural Reason, in a State of pure Nature, is a Matter of Dispute.

For tho' they knew more by Reason, than we are capable of attaining to; yet that we know this is not owing to our Reason, but Experience.

We do not discover, that this Liberty is prejudicial

dicial to Society, or inconsistent with the Nature of Things, or the Happiness of Mankind in their original State.

For the Happiness of Mankind then consisted in being governed by right Reason, and had they continued in their primitive State, all their Faculties had been subject to Reason; and, by Consequence, as this could not be naturally prejudicial to Mankind, so Reason could not possibly think so; because the Exercises of our Faculties, upon their proper Objects in Subjection to Reason, falls in with the Notion of Happiness.

And since it was not naturally prejudicial to Society, if it be enquir'd, how it comes to be so now; it is because we are not in our natural State.

That was a State of Perfection; this a State of Corruption. And,

As that was a State, wherein all the Operations of Nature were govern'd by Reason; so this is a State where our Passions are too strong for Reason: So that if they were not confin'd by what we call Marriage, Society must sink into Confusion.

This we know by Experience; and 'tis by this only, that we are capable of knowing it.

And since 'tis evident, that in a State of Purity, Mankind could not possibly have this Experience; and, therefore, could not know the Necessity of such Marriages; it will follow, therefore, it ought to be made known by Revelation.

And, therefore, here is some Revelation necessary to the Institution of Marriage. And if so, then as the Reason of the Institution of Marriage is to prevent the ill Consequences, that the Want of such an Institution must bring upon Society, upon the Corruption of Mankind; it will follow, that this Institution should be established before that Corruption.

Now whether there was any such Revelation, is again a Matter of Fact, and can only be known by

History; and if we have any such History of the first State of Mankind, which agrees with the foregoing Reasonings, it must be true.

In this then likewise the History of *Moses* agrees, where we are no sooner told of the Creation of Man, but there was an Helpmate made for him; and as it was necessary, that there should be an equal Number of Men and Women made; so here we are told of only two Persons made.

And as it was necessary to the Happiness of the World, that the Species should be increased in the Way of Marriage, and that too of one to one: So here, as we are told but of two Persons made, we are likewise told of a divine Appointment, that they should be appropriated to one another. And,

That whoever should from thenceforth take to himself a Wife, he should cleave unto her.

And thus far right Reason and Scripture agree.

3. Another Thing necessary to be made known to Man by a supernatural Revelation, even in a State of Purity, was *Language*.

For as every Thing was put in such a State, at the Creation, as was suitable to its Nature and End.

And, therefore, as Mankind was made with a natural Faculty of Speech; so they must have been placed in such a State of Society, as was suitable to that Faculty;

And since this Faculty was made perfect in its Kind, and, therefore, capable of being exercised in Conversation, so soon as they were made; it will follow, that if they were put in such a State, as was suitable to their Faculties, it must be such a State as they could converse together in, so soon as they were made.

But this could not be without a Language, and they could not naturally come by a Language, so soon as they were made. And, therefore, we must conclude, they had it in a supernatural Way.

Now

Now whether it was thus, no History does inform us.

The History of *Moses* tells us they had a Language: And, 'tis more than probable, it was by Revelation.

Corollary. And from hence we may infer, that a State of Nature, was not a State without a Revelation.

If, indeed, by Revelation be understood, what we call the Holy Scriptures; and if by being without a Revelation, be meant only, a being under the Government of Reason, this may indeed, in a limited Sense, be called a State of Nature, as it agrees with the true Notion of a State of Nature, in this particular Respect.

But it would be plainer to call it a State of Reason.

From what has been said, we may be able to form a more perfect Idea of the divine Government, in respect not only of its natural, but corrupted State.

A further View into the Government of the World, considering it, as in a State of Corruption.

Government is nothing else but the Direction of Things to their End.

And as the End of all Things is the Happiness of the World, so, the Way, by which God guides the World to Happiness, is the true Notion of the Government of it:

And if so, then, as that which is necessary to the Happiness of the World, is necessary to the Government of it.

So if we would form a perfect Notion of the Government of the World, we must consider what we can conceive necessary to the Happiness of it.

Now this we have done, so far as relates to a State of Nature, in which, as the Happiness of the World consists in being govern'd according to the

Natures of Things; so this may be called the natural Government of God.

But then, as a State of Nature was such a State, wherein every Thing had a Nature suited to its End, and was provided with Means for the Attainment of it:

So we have shewn, that by acting according to their Nature, all Things must certainly have attained their Ends.

And, by Consequence, there could be no other Operation of God, but Preservation, necessary to the everlasting Happiness of the World in a State of Nature.

And, therefore, if we suppose any further Operation of God necessary to the Happiness of the World now, than what was done at the Creation; we must necessarily suppose, that the World is not now in its original State of Nature; and if so, then if we would form a rational View of the Nature and Necessity of the Government of the World, we must consider,

1. How far Things are fallen from that original State.

2. What we can conceive necessary in the Nature of Things to the Happiness of the World, considering the Circumstances they are fallen into.

Of the Fall of Man.

As to the first of these, that all Things are not in that original State, in which they were created, is as certain, as 'tis evident, that all Things are not now so perfect in their Kind, as their several Kinds were originally made.

We find ourselves vastly different from our Originals, that is, from the Perfection of our first Parents:

We find a great Weakness in our Understandings, and a Disorder in our Wills; we see a woful Corruption of our bodily Faculties, both as to their moral and natural Perfection; both which our first
Parents

Parents were originally created with. We find a *Law in our Members waging War against the Law in our Minds*; and our Bodies liable to Sicknefs, Pain, and Death.

This Change and Imperfection of human Nature, I call the Corruption of it.

And if so, then since the human Nature was created in a perfect State, as being necessary to a perfect Happiness; from hence it will follow, that so far as we are wanting of that original Perfection, so far we are wanting of the Means that are necessary to our Happiness; and there must be more required to make us happy, since this Alteration of our Nature; and by Consequence, another Method of Government necessary to the World, than there was at first, before that Alteration happen'd.

And since the Reason of this Government is, that Things are alter'd from what they were; it will follow, that according to the different Degrees of this Alteration, so must there be different Methods of Government.

And since Government is nothing but the ordering of Things to their Ends, so as shall be most for their Happiness; if we can discover from the Circumstances, the World is fallen into, what Means may be necessary to the Happiness of the World, we shall be so far able to form a right Notion of the Means, that are necessary to the Government of it.

Now this we may be able to do in some Degree: For since the Happiness of Mankind requires the Perfection of the Faculties both of Soul and Body; and that not only in respect of the Faculties themselves, but likewise of their moral Subjection to right Reason.

And since we have likewise shewn, that Mankind were originally, not only made for this happy State, but made in such Perfection, as was suitable to it.

As

As it will follow hence on the one Hand; that so far as they are fallen from this State of original Perfection, so far they are fallen from Happiness, and by Consequence, can never be capable of perfect Happiness, without being restored to this original Perfection.

So it will follow on the other Hand; that this Restoration must be the great End of that Government that designs our Happiness.

And by Consequence, that whatever is a necessary Means to this Restoration, is a necessary Means of the Government of the World.

And if so, then since Mankind are so far fallen from their original State, that, Instead of the Perfection, and Immortality of their bodily Nature, they are now become corrupted and mortal; it will follow,

That if this natural Perfection of our bodily Faculties be necessary to our Happiness, it must be the Design of that Government to restore us to such a natural Perfection again.

2. Since Mankind are so far fallen from the moral Perfection of their Nature, that the inferior Faculties are now no longer in their primitive Subjection to the Mind; it will follow,

That as this Subjection is necessary to our Happiness, so it must be the Design of that Government, that orders all Things for the Happiness of the World, that our Faculties be restored to their Subjection again.

But if we further consider, that God governs all Things according to their Natures, from hence we may discover the general Methods that appear necessary for compassing of these general Designs. And therefore,

1. Tho' it is the general Design of Providence, that Mankind should be restored to a State of Immortality, yet since the Nature of Man is become mortal, we must conceive, that the general Method

of

of restoring Mankind to Immortality, will be such as consists with this natural Necessity of Death.

And if so, then since the Restoration of Mankind to Life, is the very Notion of a Resurrection; it will follow,

That the general Method of restoring Mankind to Immortality will be a Resurrection from the Dead.

2. Tho' it is the general Design of Providence, that Mankind be restored to the Perfection of their moral Nature; yet as God governs rational Creatures in a rational Way; so we must conclude, that the general Method of doing this, will be such as shall consist with their rational Nature; and shall ordinarily be effected,

1. By furnishing the Understanding with necessary Knowledge, and by directing it to Means, for the Attainment of that End it aims at.

2. By influencing the Will to determine itself to them by suitable Motives, and leaving it to chuse according to Reason.

And if, notwithstanding all these Methods on God's Part, and the strictest Endeavours and Compliance on ours, it shall be found to be naturally impossible to attain that Perfection in this Life; we may conclude,

3. That God will bestow what Men cannot attain: For since this Perfection is necessary to our Happiness, and is the End of that Providence, which intends our Happiness; it will follow,

That so far as it is beyond the natural Power of Man, so far it is necessary to be supplied by the supernatural Operation of God. And, by Consequence,

If there be any Thing necessary to be done, which exceeds our Power to do, in order to attain this Perfection; we must conclude, he will supply us with supernatural Assistance here: And,

2. If

2. If when we have done our best, we shall fall short of that entire Perfection which is necessary to our Happiness; we must then conclude.

That at the raising the Dead, he will fill up what is wanting of perfection hereafter.

But then, as the natural Reason of these Operations is, their being necessary to the Happiness of the World; we may conclude, that he, who governs all Things according to their Natures, will proportion these several Operations according to the Nature and Reason of them.

And, therefore, tho' God will supply us with supernatural Assistance, where it is wanted, yet this Assistance will be given only in that Degree, as is suitable to that Weakness or Want, that makes it necessary. And by Consequence, if Men will not do that for themselves, which they have a Power to do, and is necessary to their Happiness and Perfection, as we may conclude, that they shall be left without a supernatural Assistance here; so they shall be in a State of Imperfection and Unhappiness hereafter.

And as this Unhappiness is the Consequence of their Imperfection, and the Imperfection is in their very Nature, so this Unhappiness must be as everlasting as their Nature; and, therefore, if the one be immortal, the other must be everlasting. And so,

2. Tho' God will give the World such Means of Knowledge, and such suitable Motives to Practice, as are necessary to their Circumstances; yet we must conceive, that this will be done in Proportion to their Necessity.

And, therefore, according to the different Circumstances of Mankind, we may conclude, there have been, or will be, different Methods of divine Providence.

And if so, then, as we may conclude on the one Hand, that if ever Mankind wanted a Revelation, there has been some such Revelation made; so on the

the other Hand, since the Necessities of different Ages and Nations may be different; nay since even in the same Age and Nation, some Things may be necessary at one Time more than at another, we may hence conclude, that if there has been any Revelation, there may, for ought we know, have been many; and that what God has reveal'd, has not been deliver'd all at once: But yet we can never be sure by bare Reason, that there have; because we can never be sure what is absolutely necessary.

Besides, tho' from the Necessity of any Thing to the Happiness of Mankind in such and such Circumstances, we may conclude, that God in his Goodness, is disposed to act accordingly, yet as the Reason of his Inclination to do so, is their Happiness; so we must conceive he will do, or will not do it, according as he sees it will contribute to their Happiness. His Goodness disposes him to do Good to his Creatures only according to their Capacities; and if his Wisdom sees they are not capable of what he is disposed to do for them; because they will receive Evil by it; he may easily forbear the doing it; even for the Sake of Goodness.

And, therefore, as the End of God's Revelation is the Instruction of Mankind, 'tis the greatest Wisdom to make his Revelations in such Time and Manner, as shall best answer this Design.

And, therefore, tho' in many Cases we may think there is Reason to expect such and such Dispensations of Providence, as being suitable to such particular Necessities; yet if Things do not fall out according to our Expectations, we must not say, that God's Operations are not right; because *his Thoughts are above our Thoughts.*

But, however, tho' we cannot make a certain Judgment in this Case; yet as we are sure, that in the general God will suit the Dispensations of his Providence so, as shall be most necessary to our Happiness;

Happiness; so if we can by any Means discover what Necessities Mankind may have been under in Time past, and what Means might be necessary to their Happiness in those Necessities; this is a good Foundation to build our Notions of Providence upon.

But then, as we can know nothing of former Times, but by History, so we must have Recourse to this to satisfy us, as to what God has done in this Particular: And if we have any credible History, that gives an Account of the divine Providence, we shall have as much Assurance in this Matter, as the Nature of the Thing will bear.

Now that I call a credible History in its own Nature, which relates Matters of Fact, agreeing with the Natures and Reasons of Things: And as the Natures and Reasons of Things have been the Rule, by which we have here form'd our Notions of Providence; so far as any History of Providence agrees with those Notions, so far we must esteem it a credible History.

The general Credibility of the Scripture History proved.

Now such a History we have in the *holy Scriptures*.

The Account it gives us of a State of Purity, has been already consider'd; and as for what it says of Mankind after their Depravation, we find it correspond in every Instance.

For since we have shewn, that it was Sin that gave Occasion for all the various Dispensations of Providence; we have here not only an Account of the Rise and Progress of Sin, the various Methods used to stop the Increase and Repair of the Inconveniences of it; but we are here told, that it is the whole Design of Providence to make Mankind happy, and that by this only Means of making them holy.

And as this Holiness cannot be attained without proper Rules to walk by, and proper Means to pre-

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vent Sin; so in this Book we have Laws prescribed, such as, in their own Nature, tend to Holiness; and likewise such Motives offer'd, as are naturally fitted to prevail upon every reasonable Man.

And as the Happiness of Mankind cannot be attain'd in this State of Imperfection and Mortality; so 'tis here set forth as the general Design of providence to bring them to a State of Perfection and Immortality in another World.

And as the particular End of all God's Dispensations, is before shewn, to be the Happiness of those particular Persons they are intended for, and vouchsafed to, according as their particular Necessities call for them.

And as the particular Circumstances of People must be different at different Times: and therefore must require different Dispensations; so we have here an Account of various Methods taken at different Times:

And as we have shewn, that Mankind might have wanted a Revelation; and therefore, God might vouchsafe some Revelation to them; and as there may be different Reasons for different Revelations at different Times: So we have an Account in this Book, not only of various Revelations, and at different Times according to the different Occasions and Capacities of those whom they have been given to.

And upon this Account it seems to carry a strong Evidence of the Credibility of the History itself, and the Revelations contained in it.

But because the Credibility of this Book is of the last Importance to Religion, I will examine it distinctly. But I beg Leave to postpone it a while, till I have made some Observation from what I have before said, relating to the Christian Religion. For as I have deduced, from the foregoing Reasonings the Credibility of the Scripture History in general; so they afford us an evident Proof of the Christian Religion in particular.

For,

464 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

For, if as I have shewn, that God is disposed to do Good to his Creatures, according as their Necessities require; and by Consequence, when they are under a Necessity of a Revelation, will grant them one:

Then it will follow, that if the World was fallen into such a Condition before our Saviour came, as they could not be happy in, nor be deliver'd from, by the Power of natural Reason only; and therefore wanted a Revelation, there has been some suitable Revelation given.

And if Christianity came to assist the World in this, and has furnish'd Mankind with all Things necessary; there can be no stronger Proof than this, that this is the Revelation of God.

Now whether the World was in such Circumstances, as to need a Revelation, and whether Christianity is such a one, is our next Business to consider.

The Necessity of a Revelation before the Coming of Jesus Christ.

What Circumstances the World was in can only be known by History; and as 'tis a particular Providence of God to us, to preserve many antient Books, which are allowed to be written about that Time: So we are informed from them of such a deplorable State of Mankind, as they could not deliver themselves from; and yet could not be happy in.

The World was then divided into *Jew* and *Gentile*.

As for the *Jews*, I shall consider them hereafter.

The Necessity of a Revelation to the heathen World, I will here consider.

And this will sufficiently appear, if the Want of almost every Thing necessary to the Happiness of Mankind, as rational Creatures, will be a sufficient Proof of it.

The State of the heathen World consider'd.

The

The first Thing necessary to the Happiness of the World was to know, wherein Happiness lies, and the proper Means to attain it: But this the Heathens so little understood, that St. *Austin* tells us, out of *Varro*, that they had two hundred and eighty eight different Opinions concerning it.

And whereas the ultimate Happiness of Man consists in the Enjoyment of God, and the Way to enjoy God, is to be like him; and this Likeness is to be attained only by Virtue and Holiness; it is necessary that Mankind should not only be informed of the true Nature of God, with the true Notion of Virtue and Holiness; but also be encouraged in the Practice of them.

And whereas, in order to this End, 'tis necessary, that a due Sense of God and our Dependence on him be firmly settled in our Minds, by proper Acts of outward Worship: So 'tis equally necessary, that the World should be informed of this, so as always to do it acceptably.

But of these Things the Heathens knew little.

What Notions they had of the divine Nature, we may judge of by that Rabble of Deities, they paid their Adorations to; and those absurd Superstitions, and sometimes cruel and inhuman Rites, that they practised and approved of.

And under such Ideas of the divine Nature, and his Worship, what can we expect their Morals to have been?

'Tis no Wonder to find what we read of them, that they were universally sunk into the very Dregs of Corruption and Debauchery. (*See 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Eph. iv. 17, 18, 19. Rom. i.*)

And whilst we consider this wretched State of Mankind, so ignorant both of the Nature of God, and themselves; and so depraved both in Mind and Manners; how was it possible for them to attain true Happiness?

There could be no Possibility of it, but by a

Reformation, and how this could be effected, is the Question:

It must either be by Reason, or Revelation.

But Reason alone was not sufficient to reform the World, before Christianity appeared.

But here I would have you observe, that by Reason, I do not mean what Reason could do of its own Nature, but what it could do for the World in the Circumstances they were fallen into, towards their Recovery out of them.

Now to shew, that the World could not recover themselves out of those sad Circumstances, by the bare Use of their Reason; we may first consider, that whatever the natural Power of Reason was in a State of Purity, there was little remaining of it in that degenerate State of Mankind we speak of: If there had been any such Power among them; one would have thought that some Body would have drawn out some intire Scheme of Religion and Morality, from the Natures and Reasons of Things, to be a Guide to the People in those Days. But nothing of this Kind has yet appeared in the World.

'Tis indeed easy for Christians, with the Light of Revelation, to shew how they agree with Reason; but it would not have been so easy to discover those Things by Reason only, without that Light.

But suppose some lucky Thinkers have hit upon it; this is an Argument to shew, that Mankind in general are not able to do, what either has not been done at all in any Age; or if at all, it may be by very few.

But whatever has been done by any under the Influence of Christianity, 'tis certain, there was nothing like this before it; and whatever bright Genius's might do, Reasoning is not the Talent of the common Herd.

They who are most likely to find out Truth and Error, must be Men of Speculation, and Learning:

Learning : And there were many of this Sort in those Days.

But even these Men were able to do little. They were not only but few in Comparison of the whole heathen World, but they also, after all their nice Enquiries after Truth, were ignorant of it. They did not agree about the *Summum Bonum*, or Happiness of Man : They were uncertain about the Nature of God, as we may read in *Diogenes*, *Laertius*, and *Cicero*.

And tho' some of them hit upon the Truth in some Respects, and had juster Notions of God than others ; yet they were all mere Conjectures at the best, such as they themselves could not depend upon.

So that Reason could do little here.

And as to the Worship of God, tho' many of the Philosophers saw the Folly of the customary Superstitions, and severely inveighed against them ; yet it does not appear that they condemned Idolatry, for they were Idolaters in Practice ; and even gave it out, as a standing Rule, that all People ought to be so.

Thus it was with the Philosophers as to Idolatry ; which, as it was evident, they had no Desire to reform ; so it does not appear they knew how to do it.

But suppose they had been informed of the true Worship of God, and had been ever so zealous for the Reformation of the false one ; yet there was no moral Possibility of succeeding in it, by the Power of Reason only.

For the Worship then in use had not only been established by Law, and confirmed by Oracles ; but it was what had been long received, and what the People had been bred up in, and was justified by universal Practice.

And can we think, that all this could, in the Nature of the Things, be set aside by the bare

Speculations of a few thinking Men, without any Authority, but bare Argument to support them? We all know the Power of Education: We all know what natural Affection all People have to the Customs of their Country, and what Regard to the Judgment of their Ancestors: And, by Consequence, what Weight a Religion established must carry with it:

And what Hopes could the wisest Men have even of being so much as heard against this?

But when this was confirm'd by their Oracles, which they esteem'd the Voice of God, what could all the Reason in the World signify against this?

And, therefore, nothing but an undeniable Evidence of a divine Authority, and such as was sufficient to overthrow the Authority of their Oracles, could possibly convince them of their Error. So that there was a Necessity of a divine Revelation, for the Reformation of Idolatry; and that this Revelation should be confirmed by God in proper Tokens of his Almighty Power: And as Miracles are allow'd to be proper Evidences of such a Power; there was, by Consequence, such a Necessity of Miracles, that no Revelation could have been sufficient without them.

And since the Philosophers pretended to no such Thing, there could be no Reformation expected from them.

Besides, Idolatry was supported by public and private Interest; it was the Invention of Priests and Politicians. The deifying of famous Men was invented for the raising up a Spirit of Ambition for the Good of the Commonwealth. And whatever was the Origin of their Auguries and Oracles, yet, 'tis certain, they were made use of to serve the Occasions of the Public. (*Vide Cic. de Divin. Lib. II.*)

And if this was the Reason for the retaining them so long, the same Reason will hold for the continuing of them.

But

But as this Religion was calculated for the Service of the Public; so was it no less for the Interest of particular Persons. 'Tis certain the whole Priesthood subsisted by it, and innumerable Families of trading People.

And considering this, we cannot think it could be easy for bare Reason to abolish this Religion: We cannot suppose the State would be patient under the Opposition; much less the Priests and People who had their Subsistence from it. And as there were known Laws against Innovations in Religion, we may be sure, that they would not be wanting to put them in Execution. *Socrates* was an Instance of this, who, tho' he opposed only some of their more ridiculous Superstitions, fell a Sacrifice to their Fury.

And as this was the Case, it required more Zeal, Courage, and Patience to undertake such Difficulties, to go thro' such Dangers, and undergo such Persecutions, than the Philosophers were indued with.

Had they seen the Truth perfectly themselves, yet few have such a Love for it, as to venture their Lives for the Sake of it; especially when they have no Assurance of a better World.

But if some might have been so hardy, their Number would not have been sufficient for an universal Reformation: And if we suppose them to escape all Danger, and have free Liberty to speak their Sentiments; yet it must be an incredible Strength of Reason, that must not only prevail upon all the World, but also inspire Men with such a Love of Truth, as to be content to starve for the Sake of it.

And yet thus it must have been with vast Crowds of Families, and all the Priesthood upon the Reformation of Religion; so that there could be no Probability of any such Thing.

And if there was no Probability, when we sup-

pose the best; what Possibility could there be of it under the utmost Danger and Opposition, when the wisest of them could be sure of nothing, and were so far from opposing the erroneous Worship, that they actually conformed to it and encouraged it?

From these Considerations the Necessity of a Revelation is plain for the Reformation of the heathen World, as to their Minds and Notions in respect of the Nature of God and his Worship, and the Nature and Means of their own Happiness.

And from all these Things put together, we hence are taught what Kind of Revelation that must be, which should be given to reform the World at that Time, *viz.*

1. That it inform Mankind of the true Notion of Happiness, and how to attain it; of the Nature of God, and how to worship him as God; and likewise that it be suited to the effectual Overthrow of Idolatry.

2. That it be supported by the Power of such Miracles, as should be fitted to convince the World of the Falseness of their Oracles.

3. That it be deliver'd by proper Persons, with suitable Zeal to undertake all Difficulties, suitable Courage and Resolution to disregard all Dangers, and suitable Patience to endure all Persecutions.

The Necessity of a Revelation to the Reformation of the Manners of the World.

We come now to consider how far Reason was capable of doing this.

And here I will prove, that Reason was not capable of it.

The first Thing necessary for the Reformation of the World, was a Rule of Life, by which they might be taught what to do, and avoid, and how to amend what was amiss: Otherwise the World would grow worse and worse, because they must be governed only by Example; and in a World abounding

bounding with bad Examples, Vice must every where increase; and as they could not know what was amiss, they could not know what to amend.

Now whether Reason could discover such a Rule of Life in that State of the World, is the Question.

And in Answer to it, 'tis certain, that there are some Things so apparently good and evil, that there needs no other Light but Reason to discover them. But this could be a Rule no farther than it went; and whereas Morality is necessary to the compleat and perfect Happiness of Man, in order to this Happiness, the Rule of Morality ought to be compleat.

Now if Reason could have discover'd this, we may expect to find something of it in the Remains of their learned Men.

But there is no such Thing; nor can the wisest Man now pick up an entire and perfect System of Morality from them altogether.

But suppose some few of them had hit upon the Truth, and could have reduced it into a regular System; yet this never could have reformed the World, till it was received as a standing Rule, and People were convinced it was the Truth. Yet even the Philosophers were so far from any Probability of this, that they were greatly divided in their Notions, even of Good and Evil.

And if the Learned could not find out this, what could Reason do in vulgar People? The Philosophers could not teach them, what they were ignorant of themselves, and their Disputes would rather perplex than satisfy.

And tho' some of them should have happen'd to have hit the Point; yet how should the Vulgar know how to find it out among so many divided Sects? if they could not choose what Sect to be of by their Reason; the Consequence would be, that every one would choose those Notions which

would make them most easy in their Vices, and best serve their worldly Ends.

But suppose all the Philosophers had agreed in their Opinions, and fixed upon a certain Rule of Life; to make it sufficient to the End of Reformation, 'twas necessary the World should submit to it, as such; but how could they possibly compass this? They could but reason with the World at best; but Reason will do but little against Inclination, Lust and Interest.

There is no reforming the World but by such Authority as can govern and influence the World. Human Governors may do much to prevent the outward Practice of Vice; but they cannot reform their Minds, nor plant good Dispositions in the Heart; without which there can be no true Virtue.

Nothing could do this but the Authority of God: And, therefore, nothing can be a sufficient Rule of Life, but what is founded upon this Authority.

This all the Lawgivers of the Antients were so sensible of, that they all pretended to have received their Laws from Heaven: Which tho' only Pretence to delude the People into Obedience; yet this plainly shews, that they thought the Belief of a divine Authority the only proper Means for this. And if this was necessary to the Reformation of the World, there could be no such Authority; and, therefore, no Reformation possible without a Revelation.

'Tis true, it may be said, that the Laws of Nature are the Laws of God; and as these Laws are discoverable by the Light of Reason, so soon as they are discovered to the World, they carry their own Authority and Obligation along with them; and there needs no other Revelation to enforce them.

'Tis very right: But they must be first discover'd to the World, and that too to be the Laws of God, before they ought to be received as such; and

and in what Method could the Philosophers do this?

Tho' the Laws of Nature are discoverable by Reason, yet the ancient Philosophers could not discover this, because they were ignorant of the Nature of God, which is the Measure of all Perfection; and the right Notion of the Happiness of Man, which is the End, to which all our Actions ought to be directed, and by which they are to be adjusted.

And tho' many of them talked excellently well of Virtue, and advanced Morality to a great Pitch, yet they did it chiefly upon Principles of Honour, and Generosity, and conveniency to the Welfare of civil Life. They never urged the Practice of them out of Duty to God, or for his Glory: They consider'd them only as fit and reasonable to be observed; but we never find them pressing any Duty as a natural Law, to be observed in Obedience to God, and in the Nature of Things necessary to Happiness in the Enjoyment of him.

But suppose they could have drawn out a System of moral Laws upon this Foot, how was it possible to make the World submit to them as the Laws of God?

This could only be done by Reason; and yet Reason could not do this.

The Subject is dark and intricate, and requires a long Train of close Reasoning to make it out; which lower Understandings are not Judges of, and, therefore, not affected with.

And if they had Capacity to understand this, they cannot be supposed to have had any Inclination to attend to it: And, considering how depraved the World was, we cannot think the most prevailing Reasons would be regarded, which came to disturb them in their darling Vices, and teach them what they desired not to know.

But suppose the People had been ever so well disposed

posed to hearken to Instruction; and ever so desirous of doing their Duty; yet the wise Men of those Times were not equal to the Work.

It was a Work of inconceivable Difficulty, and vast Extent, that required many Hands, and great Zeal and Application.

All the Prejudices of the World were to be rooted out, their Errors corrected, their Passions subdued, and their evil Habits conquer'd: There also must have been a great Number of Persons employed to effect all this: Whereas the Philosophers were very few, and they scatter'd up and down in Places only of great Resort for Learning.

But had they travell'd up and down to teach the World their Duty, yet this would have done but little to the bettering Mankind, without a constant Attendance, and a continual Succession: For many Things would be wanted, which could not be provided for at once; many Errors would arise, that must be corrected; many Doubts, that must be satisfied; and many would waver, that must be reduced.

And yet there could be no Probability of any such Thing, unless the Philosophers would undertake it of themselves. And no Man can suppose, that they could all agree to leave their Habitations and worldly Affairs, upon their own mere Motion and pure Zeal; if we reflect, that they consider'd Things rather out of a Regard to Wisdom and Fame, than Virtue, or the Love of Mankind. (*Acts xvii. 21.*)

But suppose they had been intent upon Reformation, yet the World would not have easily believed what they said, unless they had lived suitably to what they taught; which they did not; many of them leading very scandalous Lives.

But suppose they had been ever so zealous for the Reformation of the World, and ever so exemplary in their Lives; yet as all the World was to be reformed,

formed, they could not do this, without first learning the Languages of every different Country. But this, in the Nature of Things, requires more Time than any Man can possibly find.

So that could we suppose all the Philosophers of the learned Nations relolved to transplant themselves into the several Corners of the World; and that there was a sufficient Number of them for the Purpose; that they had Zeal and Patience enough to apply themselves to the Learning of the several Languages; yet unless we can suppose, that they could attain to such Perfection in them, as to be able to carry on their Undertaking readily, no Benefit could be expected from them. But this cannot reasonably be supposed.

But suppose still further, that there was no Want of Language, nor any of the forementioned Qualifications; yet the World could not be reformed while the established idolatrous Religion continued in Force.

And yet this Religion was so far from being opposed by the Philosophers, that they encouraged it.

So that from all these Things consider'd together, there could be no Reformation, as the World then was, by the bare Power of Reason only; and by Consequence, as we are hence assured of the Necessity of a Revelation; so we are further taught, what Kind of Revelation it must be, *viz.*

1st, That it offer to the World a perfect Rule of Life, built upon the Authority of God.

And as nothing ought to be received, as coming from God, without a proper Evidence of his Authority; so,

2. It was necessary, that this Rule of Life should be attended with, and confirmed by some such proper Tokens of a divine Attestation, as that it might be known to come from God.

And as the End of all this must be naturally defeated,

feated, by the ill Lives of those who deliver it to the World; so,

3. There is a Necessity, that they who should be chosen for this Work, should be Persons of exemplary Holiness.

And, as the Gift of Languages is necessary to fit them for the Undertaking; so we may expect,

4. In a general Revelation, that these Things be found attending it.

And thus have I done with the first Consideration, *viz.* the Necessity of a sufficient Rule of Life, in order to a general Reformation of Manners, and the Invalidity of Reason to discover this:

2dly, Another Thing necessary for the same End was, an Assurance, that God would pardon Sin. For when the Will of God should be known in a standing Rule of Life; and when, by comparing their Lives with that Rule, they should see how they had offended God; it would be in vain for them to reform themselves, unless they could be assured of a Reconciliation: And yet, whether God would be reconcil'd, or not, and what must be the Means of Reconciliation, was impossible for bare Reason, at that Time, to know; for this must depend upon the Will of God, and can only be known by Revelation.

Reason would tell them, that God was good:

The same Reason would tell them, he is good to Sinners in his wonderful Patience towards them, under the multiplied Provocations they are every Day guilty of.

But this would not shew them how long this Patience would last, nor how far this Goodness would go.

The same Reason, that would assure them of God's Goodness and Patience, would likewise inform them of his Wisdom and Holiness; and as these must agree in the same perfect Nature, Reason can admit of no other Notion of his Goodness, but

but such as is consistent with his Wisdom and holiness: And consequently, that God will shew himself as good to Sinners, as his Wisdom and Holiness shall direct. And who can tell when the Wisdom and Holiness of God shall call for harsher Methods of Dealing?

It may be said, indeed, that the Reason of God's Displeasure against Sinners is their Sin, and the Way to prevent that Displeasure, is to repent.

And, doubtless, to repent, is the best Thing a Sinner can do; but still, this will not make the Sinner innocent, and, therefore, cannot be sure of Pardon: And, then, if Repentance be not always sure of Pardon, how can it be depended on?

The Heathens never did depend upon it; nay, they had no Notion of it: Their chief Dependence was upon Sacrifices of Expiation, which would have been needless, if Repentance had been thought of, or had been thought sufficient. And yet, even in these, their Reason was at a Loss. how far they would be accepted.

And, therefore, as we may conclude on the one Hand, that so far as it was necessary to be informed of this, so far there was a necessity of a Revelation: So likewise it will follow, that if God should vouchsafe a Revelation for the Reformation of the World, this must be another Qualification of it.

3^{dly}, Another Thing necessary to the Reformation of the World, which Reason could not discover, was to be assured, they should be able to do their Duty acceptably; so that if they had a Rule to walk by, and the Means of Pardon made known to them, they might be encouraged to act accordingly: But without such an Assurance, 'twould be in vain. For what signifies a Rule, if we cannot follow it? and to be sure of Pardon, if we repent and reform, if it be not in our Power to do it? and yet the World had Reason to suspect this. For considering the dismal Depravation of Mankind, Reformation was the hardest Thing in the World.

'Tis

'Tis difficult to bring a harden'd Sinner, even but to resolve to part with his Sins: And when he comes to try the Experiment, he will find so many Rubs and Temptations in his Way, that it will be no easy Matter to resist them.

And as 'tis natural to conceive he will be often overcome; these Instances of his Weakness, will be apt to incline him to suspect his Strength, and prompt him to quit what he has begun, as a Thing he is not able to go thro' with: And, therefore, there seems to be a Necessity of some Hope of Assistance in this Case to be given.

Or if he should resolve to go on as well as he can; yet his best Obedience will be so imperfect, that if he were to attend to Reason only, he could take but small Comfort in it, as being a just Doubt, whether God would accept it.

For if God be a holy Being, as every one must believe, before he will part with his Sins; how can any Man think, that this holy Being will accept such impure Services, mixt with so much Sin?

It may be said, indeed we do our best; and this is as much as any Man can do; but we ought to be sure of this, before this can be of any Comfort to us.

But supposing we can do no better; yet who is the Cause of this Inability but ourselves?

If God has a right to all we can do, and we have made ourselves incapable of doing what he had given us Power to do, our own Mismanagement will deserve his Resentment, as much as our Weakness may call for his Mercy. And which of these must fall to our Lot, depends upon the Will of God, which he alone can make known to us.

And if there was a necessity of knowing this, in order to the Reformation of the World, as there is a Necessity of a Revelation of it; so this likewise must be another Character of that Revelation, that it give Sinners some Hope of Assistance and Acceptance.

4thly, Another Thing necessary to the Reformation
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on of the World was, to be assured of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, according to their Behaviour here.

For if there be no future State, we cannot think, that a dissolute World would have any other Concern upon them, but only *to make Provision for the Flesh, to fulfil the Lusts thereof.*

So that without the Assurance of another World, there could be no Reformation expected.

But how necessary soever the Knowledge of this was, Reason was not able to attain to it.

Indeed there was some imperfect Notion of it all the World over, but they could never come to any such Certainty about it, as to make it of any Use to the Conduct of human Life.

And, therefore, so far as it was necessary to the Reformation of the World, that Mankind be informed of a future State, as there was a Necessity of a Revelation; so this likewise must be another Character of that Revelation that comes to reform the World.

So that from these Considerations, we are further informed of these three Qualifications of a divine Revelation, *viz.* The Assurance of Pardon of Sin; of the Acceptance of honest, tho' imperfect Endeavours; and of a future State of Rewards and Punishments.

And whereas all these depend on the Will of God, which can only be known by Revelation; from hence we have a further Proof of the Necessity of some such Proofs to attend this Revelation, as are a sufficient Evidence of its coming from God.

And since Miracles are universally look'd upon, as such an Evidence, we have here a Reason in the Nature of Things, that this Revelation should be confirmed by Miracles, and that Miracles in this Case, are not arbitrary Acts of God, but are acts so necessary to the Reformation of the World, that no Revelation for that End, could be depended upon without them.

And as we have thus seen what Men stood in Need of for the Reformation of their Minds and Manners;
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the next Thing to be consider'd is, whether Christianity answers to all this, and may be esteem'd a divine Revelation.

That Christianity is a divine Revelation.

The first Thing that I shewed was necessary to a Revelation, is, that it teach Mankind a true Notion of Happiness, and how to attain it; as likewise a true Notion of God, and how to worship him as God; and that it be fitted for the Overthrow of Idolatry.

And this is apparent in the Christian Religion.

As for the Happiness of Mankind, every one must know, that it is not to be had in this World, where we are liable to so many Imperfections.

The Gospel, therefore, has placed our Happiness beyond the Grave, where all Imperfection shall be done away.

And as our Happiness consists, as I have shewn, in the Perfection of our Faculties, and in a due Exercise of them on their proper Objects; and since we are endued with the Faculties of Understanding, the Object of which is Truth; and of Will, the Object of which is Good: And by Consequence, it must be our highest Happiness to have our Understandings exercised on the highest Truth, and our Wills upon the highest Good, which is God; so the Gospel places our ultimate Happiness in him.

And as we are to expect this Happiness beyond the Grave, so it is to be in a Place, where we shall be admitted to all the Delights, that the Knowledge of him, and all those Comforts we are capable of receiving from him, can afford us.

And as it is impossible to be happy, and take Pleasure in God, or to be admitted to dwell with him, without being like him; and, therefore, in order to our Happiness in God, we must be holy, true, good, and merciful, as he is; so the Gospel requires all this of us; and also, has given us such Rules to walk by, as, if we will but act accordingly, will work

work this divine Likeness in us, and make us Partakers of the divine Nature.

And as the Gospel thus provides for our Happiness in another World; so it has not been wanting to us, even here: For the very Things that are prescribed us, as the necessary Condition, and preparatory Qualification for the Glory above, are absolutely necessary for our Welfare here.

So that if we will but follow the Gospel Rules, we must be as happy as we are capable of being.

And whereas there are several Misfortunes, which we cannot be deliver'd from; Christianity has likewise provided for us in this Respect, and has furnished us with such Considerations, as are sufficient to support us under them.

And as it has thus provided for the Happiness of Man; so has it likewise instructed us in the true Nature of God; whom it represents as a Being of all Perfections, and as Maker and Governor of the World; who, as a Father, is desirous of the Good of all his Creatures; but more especially the Saviour of Men, if they will but behave themselves to him, as obedient Children.

And, with all this, he is represented to us as a Judge to whom we must give an Account of all we have, and all we do, whether it be Good or Evil.

This is the general Notion of the God of the Christians: And such a one as this, is not only agreeable to Reason, and suitable to the Nature and Necessity of Man, but productive of the highest Honour and Esteem of God, the only true Foundation of Worship and Obedience.

And with this likewise agrees the Christian Worship.

As God is our Creator and Governor, the Giver of all Things, and the Disposer of all Events; so the Christian Religion requires, as in the Natures of Things we ought, that we come to him for what we want, and acknowledge his Bounty in what we have. And this in such a Way as is suitable to

his Nature : And, therefore, as *he is a Spirit*, it must be done *in Spirit*, and *in Truth* : And thus we are to do to him only, without any corporeal Image or Similitude of him, without Rival or Co-partner with him.

But to make this truly Christian, it must be done in the Name, and thro' the Mediation of *Jesus Christ*, because it is thro' him alone, that we hope to be accepted.

For as we are all Sinners, and are therefore unworthy to offer any Sacrifice to God ; so to keep up a Sense of our Unworthiness in our Minds, and of the heinous Nature of Sin, God will not admit us to approach his Presence, to present any Petitions to him, but what are brought by a holy and undefiled Hand.

And, therefore, he has appointed an Advocate for us, *Jesus Christ the righteous*, who as he came into the World for our Salvation, and died for our Redemption ; so he now sits at the Right Hand of God, and *ever lives to make Intercession for us*.

This is the only Article that distinguishes the Christian from a pure natural Worship. And tho' this is Matter of mere Revelation, yet it is such an Institution, as Reason not only approves of, as worthy of God to appoint ; as being useful to Religion in general, as it tends to preserve in us a due Sense of our Unworthiness as Sinners ; and of the Holiness of that God we sin against ; and, at the same Time, to comfort us in the Assurance of his Mercy thro' the Intercession of a holy Saviour ; but also as it was particularly necessary at the Time of its Appointment to the Reformation of the Idolatry of the World.

For a great deal of this was evidently owing to a Want of some Revelation of this Kind ; for all Mankind have had a Notion of the Necessity of a Mediator.

And having no certain Guide to direct their Reason

son in the Choice of proper Persons for this Office, they set up to themselves various Intercessors, according to their bewilder'd Fancies; to prevent which there was a Necessity of Revelation in this Case.

'Tis, therefore, a particular Mark of the Divinity of this Revelation, relating to the Worship of God, that it is appointed to be offer'd up thro' such a Mediator as is sufficient for us, who is not only the *beloved Son of God*, and our Friend and Brother; but is such a one, as we know by sufficient Evidence, is not only willing, but *able to do the uttermost* for all *those that come unto God by him*.

So that after this Revelation, there was no longer Need of that Crowd of Mediators, which the Heathens sought out for themselves, having one, who was all-sufficient for them. And, therefore, this is a most effectual Way of rooting out that Idolatry which had prevailed among them; and was, by Consequence, a wise and reasonable Institution of Worship, had it served no other End, but this.

If it be any Objection to this Christian Scheme of Worship, that *Jesus Christ*, the Son of God, is commanded to be honour'd, as we honour the Father; we must consider, that this makes no real Difference.

For the Son is represented, as having the Godhead dwelling in him, so that when he is worshipped, it is the Godhead that is worshipped in him, or thro' him.

And as the *New Testament* says, that there is *but one God*, and that God *the Father*; and since our Saviour says, that the Godhead which *dwelt in him*, was *the Father*, it will follow, that that which is worshipped in the Worship of the Son, must be the Father, who in other Places is said to be *manifested in the Flesh*, and to be in *Christ Jesus reconciling the World unto himself*.

In this View of that Matter deliver'd in plain Scripture Words, the Difficulty ceases; and it is so far from favouring Idolatry in itself, that this seems to have been appointed for the Destruction of it.

For as God is an invisible Being, 'tis hard for Men who are inured to material Objects, to address themselves to him, but under some material Phantasm: And this, as it is in itself an Idolatry of the Mind, so it was probably the Origin of the more refin'd Idolatries of the Heathens, who, perhaps, might worship at first the true God only, but under visible Representations: And by this they might be led, by Degrees, to think, that God was in himself, what those Images represented him to be: And thus by being carried from one Thing to another, they came to such a degenerate State, that the true Notion of God was quite lost.

Now as Christianity came to reform the World, and to root out Idolatry, it was necessary to that End, that this should be prevented: And this might be one Reason, why God was pleased to exhibit himself under the Veil of human Nature, *viz.* to fix their Thoughts upon, and determine their Worship to himself alone.

If this be so, we must conceive Jesus Christ, not only as a Mediator; but God seems to have consecrated to himself his very Flesh, as the Medium whereby we must come to him; as if he intended thereby to be distinguished by the Character of God in *Christ Jesus*; to whom, as he is so united, as to become one with him, so he will be worshipped thro' him.

If any think it difficult to conceive how *Jesus Christ* can be so united to the Godhead, and yet act as a Mediator; we must consider his Mediation is founded in Scripture on his being a *Propitiation for our Sins*; and his *Intercession* is represented to us by his going to Heaven to present the Blood of his Sacrifice before God, who, tho' he dwells in *Jesus Christ* bodily, and acts in him, yet he displays his majestic Presence there.

So that his Intercession is his presenting that Body before the Throne of God, which God had prepared for him, whereby to make an Atonement for Mankind.

Mankind. And, therefore, when we pray to God thro' the Mediation of Christ, we must mean thro' the Merits of that Expiation he has made for us; and in this Sense it will easily appear, how he may be a Mediator and Intercessor for us, tho' he is one with God.

Thus we see how Christianity answers to this first Character of such a Revelation, as was necessary to reform the idolatrous World, in giving them right Notions of the happiness of Man, and the Means of attaining it; and the true Notions of the Nature of God and his Worship.

But as this would signify little, whilst they believed their own Way of Worship was divine. So,

The next Thing necessary to a Revelation, was such an apparent Evidence of a divine Authority accompanying the first Preachers of it, as was sufficient to convince the World, that the Gods they worshipped were no Gods.

And this is such a Character, that so evidently agrees to Christianity, that it cannot be doubted by any one, that considers that wonderful Series of miraculous Works which were wrought by our Saviour and his Apostles, and their Successors, in the first Ages of the Church; which were so apparent, that even the wisest Adversaries of Christianity acknowledged the Facts as true.

But whatever Evidence the Christian Revelation received from these Works; yet there seems to be something more required in this Case, than bare Miracles in general: For as the Oracles were esteem'd by the People, as the Voice of God; there seems to be a Necessity of some such Works, as were fitted to convince them of their mistaken Notion.

And this Character remarkably shewed itself in the first Beginnings of Christianity: For no sooner was this Revelation open'd to the *Gentiles*, but where-ever it came, it silenced their Oracles, and forced their Gods from their Temples: And this it did in so remarkable a Manner, that their own Writers acknowledge and wonder at it. [*Vide Euseb.*

486 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

Præp. Evang. Lib. V. Cap. 1. Cypr. Epist. ad Demet. Sect. 12. Lactan. Lib. IV. Cap. 27.]

And if these Things were so, as History reports them, what greater Proof could there be given of the Falshood of the heathen Gods, and the Oracles that supported them? And what greater Proof could there be of the Authority of the Christian Revelation? One would think, that all People should immediately have submitted to such an Evidence.

But, however reasonable it may be to expect this Effect, yet considering the Prejudices of Education, and the Arts of cunning Men, the Power of Interest, and the Force of Punishments to discover Innovations, this must meet with great Difficulties at first, and it would require, as I said before, an uncommon Zeal in the first Preachers of this new Religion, to undertake so hard a Work, and undaunted Courage, and unparallel'd Patience, to bear up against so much Opposition that would be made against them, and the Punishment that would be inflicted on them.

This I observed already was another Qualification of such a Revelation, as should come to reform the World, and root out Idolatry.

And this likewise was so remarkable in the first Preachers of Christianity, that they seem'd regardless of every Thing, but the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Mankind.

And tho' they knew before-hand what Treatment they should meet with, yet they were not discouraged by this Prospect.

And tho' they found all this true by Experience every Day, yet they behaved themselves with Patience under it. Nay, they rejoiced that *they were thought worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ.*

Such were the first Preachers of the Gospel Revelation, and such the noble Spirit by which it was carried on; a Spirit that seems to have something more than human in it.

And

And if such a Spirit was so necessary to the Reformation of Idolatry, that it could not be expected without it, it is a strong Confirmation of the Divinity of the Christian Revelation, that this Spirit attended it in so eminent a Degree, that it cannot reasonably be imputed to any other Cause, but a divine Power, and Assistance only.

Thus have I demonstrated the Agreement of the Christian Religion with all those foremention'd Characters of a divine Revelation, which were necessary for the Reformation of the Notions of Mankind.

I come now to consider the next Thing to be re-form'd, which could not be done without a Revelation, *viz.* their Manners: And as I have before shew'd, what Characters were necessary to such a Revelation; if these likewise agree to the Christian Religion, this must be the Revelation we enquire after.

Now the first Character of such a Revelation, as was necessary to reform the Manners of the World, is, that it gave them a perfect Rule of Life, built upon the Authority of God, and enforced by the Example of the Teachers of it.

And this appears very evidently in the Gospel, and that not only, as it proposes to us the pure and holy Nature of God, as the Rule of our Imitation, directing us to be holy, as he is holy; but also as it prescribes the best Method to make us so; teaching us not only to live *soberly, righteously, and godly*; but to *deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, and to *cleanse ourselves from all Filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit*.

And in order to this, as it gives us a general Transcript of our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and ourselves; so it forbids us every irregular Passion.

'Tis true, indeed, we have not every Duty, and every Sin particularly named to us; but we are taught such Topics to reason from, by which we may be led to the Knowledge of them.

For as we are commanded *to love God with all our*

488 *A Demonstration of true Religion.*

Heart, we are hereby commanded every Thing that is a natural Expression of this Love.

So likewise, as we are commanded *to love one another*, as we love ourselves, so this must shew itself differently, according to our different Relations :

And with all this 'tis required of us, that *whatsoever Things are honest*, &c. these we should study and endeavour after.

But to carry this still higher, we are further taught to do every Thing in the most exemplary Manner, that as we know better than other People, we should do more than they. Nay, we are not only required to exceed others, who have not the same Light with us, but we are to *study to excel* even one another : So that as we stand in various Relations, which naturally require various Duties of us ; so we must endeavour to excel one another in those Duties.

And to make this still the more perfect, whatever is pressed upon us, as a Duty, is not, as the heathen Morality was, from a Consideration of Convenience, Pleasure, or Reputation, but as the Will of God.

For tho' 'tis true, there is no Duty commanded in the Gospel, but what is for our Advantage, and no Sin forbid, but what is hurtful to us ; yet this is not to be the prime Motive of our Obedience, nor is this to be the Foot upon which we are to act, but we are to do all for the Love, and to the Glory of God, and in Obedience to his Will.

This is the Gospel Rule of Life, than which nothing can be conceived more full in all Respects.

But how perfect soever this Rule of the Christian Life is, it was not likely to gain upon a wicked World, unless enforced by the Examples of those that taught it.

And, therefore, as an exemplary Life was a Circumstance necessary to the Reformation of the World ; so this was what Christ and the first Preachers of the Gospel were particularly distinguished by, as even the Adversaries of Christianity have acknowledged.

And

And whilst Christianity was thus recommended by such examples, this must necessarily tend to the Reformation of the World, so far as their Influence could reach; for by this they demonstrated, that the Things they taught, were not mere speculative, but practical Truths intended to regulate and amend our Lives; and that they were not beyond the Reach of human Nature, when they themselves led the Way before them; and that too in the most exalted Degrees even of the most difficult Duties. And this must naturally shew, that their Intention was only to make Men Good and Happy.

But whatever Advantage Christianity might receive from the exemplary Lives of the first Teachers of it, yet as they preached to a very wicked World, there could be no Hopes of Reformation, without some Assurance of Pardon.

And this is another Character of a divine Revelation so remarkable in Christianity, that the very End of our Saviour's coming into the World, was *to save Sinners*, and the whole Gospel is nothing but a Declaration of the Mercy of God to them, and the Means by which it was to be attained by them. And as the Reformation of the World is the Design of the Revelation; and, therefore, we must in Reason expect, that the Mercy offer'd in such a Revelation must be in such a Way, as is suitable to this End; and, by Consequence, not to give the least Encouragement to Sin; so we find this particularly taken Care of in the Christian Method of Reconciliation with God: For it teaches us that God is a holy Being; but nevertheless, that he is not willing that any Sinner should perish. And, to prevent this, he offers them Pardon, upon Condition that they part with their Sins, and become good Men.

And tho' God is represented upon such a Repentance, to be as ready to forgive us, as a tender Father is to forgive his penitent Son. Yet we are taught, that this Repentance shall not be accepted,
but

but thro' the Sacrifice of the Death of Christ, thereby to convince us of the Necessity of forsaking all Sin, when the Pardon of it could not be procured, but at so great a Price.

This Sacrifice *Jesus Christ* has offered for us voluntarily, which, tho' it was in one Respect a Confirmation of his Mission, yet it was also done, as an Expiation for us. And as God laid on him the Iniquities of us all, so he has declared the Acceptance of his Blood, as a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World: So that if they will turn from their Wickedness, they shall save their Souls alive.

And to assure us of his Acceptance of the Death of Christ, he not only raised him from the Dead, and has given us a Privilege upon our Repentance to plead the Merit of his Sacrifice for us; but he has also taken him into Heaven, and has given him all Power, that we may rest satisfied, that *he is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him.*

This is the Gospel Scheme of Reconciliation; and the Wisdom of this Contrivance will be more remarkable, if we add one Consideration more, *viz.* that this Method of Reconciliation was particularly suited to the Notions of Mankind; and was fitted not only to the Reformation of their Manners, but also idolatrous Worship.

All the World had a Notion of the Necessity of an Expiation by Sacrifice: And as they knew no Rule to regulate their Expiations by, but the Nature of their Sins, which might reasonably be supposed to require greater Atonements according to their different Degrees of Guilt; so this begot not only a very costly Worship, but also produced a savage Practice of sacrificing Men, and Women, and Children, imagining that the Dignity of human Nature, and the Innocency of Children, would be of so much the greater Efficacy to their Purpose.

Now as we are convinced of the Barbarity, and of the Necessity of the Abolition of it; It is a great Instance

Instance of the Wisdom of this Scheme of Reconciliation, that it not only proposes Pardon in such a Way, as is agreeable to this general Notion of the World, by a Sacrifice of Expiation for their Sins; but also such a Sacrifice, as renders all others needless: This Expiation being wrought by a Person of such Purity and Dignity, as to be sufficient for the Sins of the whole World.

If this Scheme be liable to Objection, that this Expiation is wrought by the Sacrifice of the Son of God, and that 'tis strange, that God should suffer his Son to die.

This, we must confess, is a great Mystery: But the Difficulty of this does not seem to lie in the Death, so much as in the Incarnation of the Son: For if we can conceive, that God might condescend to have a Person born in our Nature in such a Manner, as to be his own Production, and properly his Son: And if there be any Reason, that we can discover why he should live in a human Way; there is no Difficulty in supposing, that God might permit him to be put to Death; and that not only because this likewise might serve many wise Ends, but because he might be capable of a Recompence for it.

And if there might be wise Reasons for his Death it is easily conceivable, that he might voluntarily choose this, in order to those Ends to be served by it: And that God might accept of the voluntary Suffering, as a Sacrifice for the Sins of the World.

This is the Gospel Notion of it: For the *New Testament* seems to set it forth, as the Contrivance of God the Father, declared to his Son, in his præexistent State; that in order to the Redemption of Mankind he should take human Nature upon him. And the Son is represented, as voluntarily submitting to his Father's Will. [See *Heb.* x. 5.]

And as in the Body he came, and died the Death of a Slave; so God has highly exalted him in that very Nature, in which he suffer'd: and has not only declared,

declared, that he will accept of his Death, as a Price paid for our Redemption; but that no one shall be accepted by him, but in and thro' his Intercession for us.

Thus I have done with this Character of a divine Revelation, relating to the Declaration of Pardon of Sin.

The next Thing required in a divine Revelation, is the Assurance of Assistance and Acceptance: And this is so evident, that he that runs may read it.

We have the Promise of the divine Assistance of God's holy Spirit, upon the easy Condition of asking it with an honest Desire to make a due Improvement of it.

And when this holy Spirit is set forth as a divine Person, this is a vast Encouragement to set about to reform, when we know, we may be *more than Conquerors thro' him that strengthens us*, if we will, at the same Time, improve the Aid he gives us.

This is the Gospel Promise of Assistance.

But yet because thro' the Weakness of our mortal Nature we cannot always stand upright, that we should not be dishearten'd, we have a further gracious Assurance given us, that God will not be *extreme to mark what is done amiss*.

And what can be wanting in this Respect to invite a wicked People to repent and amend, that the Christian Revelation has not here proposed to them?

But yet, that nothing might be omitted, whereby it was possible to work upon them: We have,

Lastly, Another Consideration added; which is, another Character of a divine Revelation, the Assurance of a future State: And that too laid open in the plainest and the fullest Manner, with such particular Circumstances, and under such affecting Representations, as are best fitted to the End of Reformation.

The Reward that good Men are to receive then, is set forth to us, under such Ideas as are most likely to

to invite our Hope, and excite us to endeavour after it, *viz.* a Crown, a Kingdom, a Treasure, and Inheritance that fadeth not away, and a State of everlasting Pleasure.

And whereas our Bodies shall be raised again: even these shall be changed into spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal Bodies.

The Misery, on the other Hand, which wicked Men shall endure in this State, that it might work more effectually upon us, is represented under such Representations, as are most terrible to human Nature. By a *Worm that shall never die; by a Fire that will never be quenched; by a Thirst that never will be allayed.*

And lest all this should be imagined only an artful Contrivance to awe Men into Obedience; 'tis worth our Observation, that the Misery here threatened is founded in Nature, and these Similitudes have a natural Suitableness in them to the Thing they are intended to represent.

As for the Misery here threatened to Sin, 'tis such as naturally arises from it: For as our Happiness consists in the Enjoyment of God; so by being banish'd from God, we must be miserable: And yet this is the natural Consequence of Sin; for Sin is a Contradiction to Holiness; and a sinful Nature, and a holy God, are irreconcilable: And whilst a Sinner continues in this Opposition to God, there must be a perpetual Separation between them, and 'tis impossible but he must be miserable.

And when he comes to find himself irrecoverably lost, as his Conscience will gaul him with bitter Reflections; this is lively expressed by the Similitude of a *Worm that dieth not.*

And as we all have a natural Desire of Happiness; so when the Sinner shall find himself in Misery, impatiently desiring Happiness, and yet under an Incapacity of attaining it: This is very naturally represented by a Fire, tormenting him with burning Heat.

If

If any Difficulty arises in our Minds, that this Punishment is said to be everlasting, as seeming inconsistent with God's Goodness and Justice to punish finite Sins with everlasting Sufferings; we may consider, *1st*, That this Suffering is not properly an Act of God, but the natural Effect of a natural Cause; and when this Suffering is threaten'd by God, as a Punishment, 'tis nothing more than a Forewarning to Sinners of what will be the Consequence of their Folly: This he does out of mere Goodness to prevent their Ruin.

And if Men will, in Spite of all this, pursue their own Wills, they must be miserable.

And we have no more Reason to expect, that the Goodness of God should work Miracles, to prevent our Misery in this Case, than that he should prevent all the Effects of other natural Causes, that are hurtful to us. But,

2^{dly}, If we consider this Suffering as a Punishment, there is nothing consistent with the Goodness or Justice of God in it; for as Man is capable of Laws, we may expect from the Goodness of God, that he will give us such Laws, as are for our Happiness: And as Laws must be enforced by Rewards and Punishments; those Punishments are most suitable to the Goodness of God, as a wise and holy Lawgiver, which are best fitted to produce Obedience, and thereby to make us happy: And, therefore, the just Proportion of Punishment to be annex'd to Laws, is not to be measured by the Nature of Sin, but by the Suitableness of it to the End it is intended for, which is the Prevention of Sin; and by Consequence, that must be a just Measure of Punishment, which is best fitted for this Purpose.

And since 'tis plain, that the threatening of everlasting Misery is not more than enough for this Purpose; it will hence follow, that the Goodness of God, consider'd under the Direction of Wisdom and Holiness, could not have appeared so conspicuously in any less Punishment.

And

And if it be Goodness in God to threaten such Punishments thereby to affright Men into Happiness; it cannot be inconsistent with his Goodness or Justice to execute those Punishments so long as there are any Beings capable of sinning: And since the Gospel tells us, that Angels, and good Men, shall live for ever; who as they are free Beings, will, as such, be capable of Sinning; and, therefore, stand in need of proper Motives to Obedience, to preserve them innocent and happy: It will follow, that there will always be Reason for the Execution of these Punishments, because there will be always free Agents to be terrified from Sin.

These Reasonings seem plainly to demonstrate to us the Necessity of everlasting Punishments.

But how credible soever this may be, with respect to the Christian Revelation, yet all this would signify but little, unless it were attended with another Character of a divine Revelation, and that is, Miracles.

Christ and his Apostles, I have observ'd, did such Miracles as were abundantly sufficient to demonstrate to the World, that they were sent from God: And, by Consequence, the Rules they prescribed were the Will of God. But that there might be nothing wanting to give us the utmost Satisfaction, we read of some particular Miracles wrought for the Confirmation of some of the more important Articles. Thus for Instance;

As our Saviour came into the World, to reform the World; and as the first Step to a Reformation is Repentance, and the first Motive to Repentance, Hope of Pardon; so he was not content to put the Belief and Assurance of this Pardon, upon the general Credit of his other Miracles only, but he wrought a particular Miracle to shew that he had *Power upon Earth to forgive Sins.*

And as he died to redeem us, so that we might be assured of it, he rose from the Dead as a Testimony of it.

And

And as he had assured us, that our Bodies should rise again, he shewed the Certainty of it by the Resurrection of his own.

But because his Resurrection was only a Rising in this World, and because the Happiness of a Christian is to be in Heaven, that we might be sure of this, he miraculously ascended thither; and that his Disciples might not doubt of his being in Heaven; he sent down his Holy Ghost to shew his high Power there: That whereas they were chosen to *preach the Gospel to all Nations*, they might be endued with the Gift of Languages to qualify them for it.

And with these Gifts, those poor ignorant Men baffled the Wisdom of the Learned, and defeated the Opposition of the Mighty. They did what a Revelation was wanted for, and what the Christian Revelation was intended for, they reformed Mankind wherever they came.

Thus we see the Nature and Evidence, the Design and Necessity of Christianity, in order to the Reformation and Happiness of the World: And how it furnishes us with all Things necessary for this Reformation, and agrees with all the Characters of such a Revelation, as might reasonably be expected from God. And here, I must observe, that it is the very Scheme of Providence before demonstrated, from the Natures and Reasons of Things.

If there should be any Objections raised from the Relation that Christianity bears to the *Old Testament*, and the Difficulty that some pretend there is in understanding the Prophecies, and making out the Correspondence of Christianity with them, they are not to be regarded; Christianity will stand by its own internal Evidence, without Regard to the *Old Testament*.

But, however, I will demonstrate, that Christianity has sufficient Evidence of its Truth, from the Relation it bears to that Book.

The End of the Third Volume.



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